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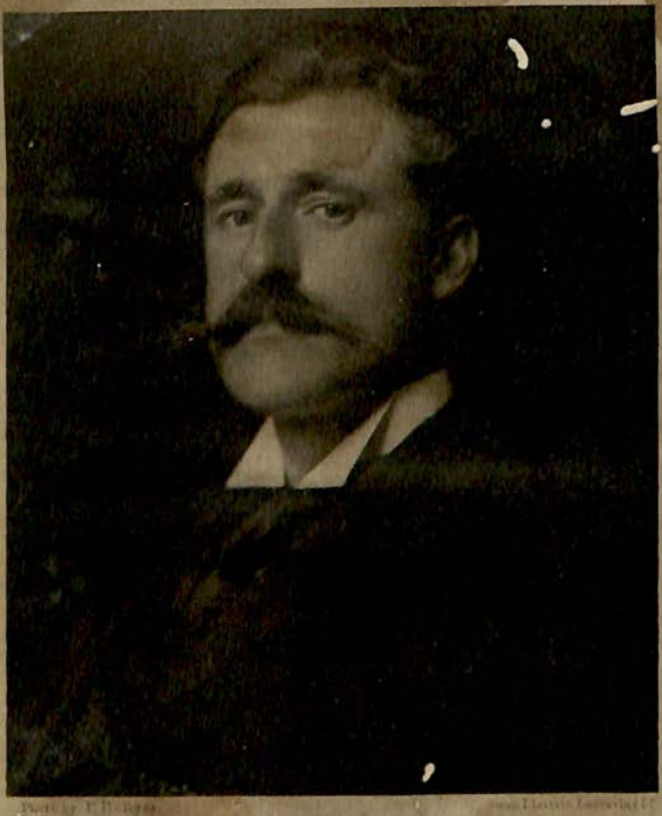
THE POEMS OF WILLIAM WATSON VOLUME ONE



William Watson

THE POEMS OF WILLIAM WATSON

54219

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME ONE

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INTRODUCTION

For any third person to stand between the public and a poet of Mr. Watson's eminence would be an impertinence of which I have no desire to be guilty. Since, however, I have played a subordinate part in preparing this collected edition of his works, it has fallen to me to say a few words in explanation of its design and of certain features which may commend it to readers and critics as something more than an ordinary reprint.

Mr. Watson has hitherto been slow to sanction any complete edition of his works. The 'Collected Poems' of 1898 made so many omissions that it became in effect a volume of selections. It excluded not only 'The Prince's Quest' and other early pieces to which a special

section is devoted in this edition, but a considerable number of later pieces which seem to me to have value and significance. Moreover, not a little of Mr. Watson's most powerful work belongs to a later date than 1898. There are writers of a copious and diffuse habit whose best is arrived at by a rigorous process of selection; but Mr. Watson is certainly not of these. He writes at long intervals, refines, rejects, condenses with a fastidiousness of self-criticism which is too rare among modern authors. He has, of course, his degrees of excellence, but his work is from the beginning a selection, and comparatively little of it falls below the standard which may properly be exacted in a new edition.

The guiding principle, it seems to me, in preparing a complete edition of any man's work, especially of any poet's work, should be not to ask whether reasons can be found for rejecting this or that poem—reasons seldom fail, if the criticism is sufficiently minute—but to consider rather whether the poem in question falls into its place in the general scheme, whether it illustrates

the writer's thought and style, or the development of his thought and style, whether, in short, it lends itself to the total effect. Here possibly the outside adviser may be of some slight assistance.

The poems here included have throughout been subjected to a careful revision, and in a few, notably 'The Dream of Man,' 'The Hope of the World,' 'Domine, quo Vadis?' 'Lakeland once more,' the last part of 'Lacrimæ Musarum,' and the first part of 'The Prince's Quest,' there are considerable alterations. I am well aware of the questions which may arise concerning these changes. Is a poet entitled to recall and refashion the offspring which have gone from under his roof, and made friends of their own who have possibly become attached even to their imperfections? Many of Mr. Watson's poems are thus affectionately regarded, but if the poet is convinced that he can remove blemishes and add to the beauty of his work, the prejudice which prefers a familiar imperfection must not be allowed to prevail. His right to do what he will with

his own extends at least to the point of presenting it in the form which best realises his intention and satisfies his taste. Mr. Watson's alterations are for the most part the result of long reflection on passages which he has felt to be capable of improvement. There are some poets of whom one might hesitate to say so much, but in the present case the utmost confidence may, I think, be placed in the author's faculty of self-criticism.

The arrangement of this volume purposely follows the simplest lines. Mr. Watson has two distinctive qualities which I would gladly have seen brought out in the grouping, had it been possible. One is the power of conveying illuminative criticism in poetical form, as, incidentally, in his Elegiac Poems, in many of his Sonnets, and in the Epigrams, which last, despite the work of other writers who have practised the aphoristic quatrain, assume in his hands an original and characteristic form. The other is a descriptive and meditative kind of poetry which, though in subject it derives from Wordsworth, departs

widely from the Wordsworthian method in its technique. To this class belong many poems which, suggested by some mood or phase of nature, deal with the greater problems of life and death, philosophy and religion. These are not easily brought together without forcing them into a classification against which they rebel, and on the whole it has seemed better to adopt the simpler groups of the old collected editions, including even the time-honoured 'Miscellaneous' for those which refuse to be classified. Poetry which is written on a plan is seldom good poetry, and to enforce a uniform scheme after the event upon a variety of different pieces, written each in its own mood without thought of the others, is to do them violence.

The section 'Early Poems' has been reserved for 'The Prince's Quest' and a few other examples of youthful work. The inclusion of these needs no apology. Apart from its imaginative quality, 'The Prince's Quest' is interesting, because it takes us back to a beginning which is rather curiously unprophetic of Mr.

Watson's subsequent development. It is an essay in the romantic and æsthetic direction exclusively; it touches neither the ethical, the intellectual, nor the practical region at any point; it abounds in quaint archaisms of diction. The reader will look in vain for any successor of this order in Mr. Watson's later work. His subsequent devotion is to an austerer mode which deliberately rejects all conceits, which lays its stress on the ethical and intellectual, and searches perpetually for more condensed and sculpturesque forms of expression. In point of style, Mr. Watson's later work stands midway, like Norman architecture, between the Classic and the Gothic, but his early poems, and particularly 'The Prince's Quest,' show us the point from which he started, and suggest a possible development on which he has quite deliberately turned his back.

A few words may be added respecting the 'Poems on Public Affairs.' Some of these, relating to events that are forgotten, or to phases of feeling which have passed away, are omitted.

But the great majority are included. Poems of this kind both lose and gain by the lapse of time. They lose by being detached from the context of events and passions which inspired them; they gain by the wider and more generalised appeal which they make when their controversial occasion is forgotten. John Bright's speeches on the Crimean War are cherished as classics by a great many people who would have abhorred his opinions if they had been living at the time when the speeches were delivered. It is with poetry of this order as with oratory. Its power of surviving the occasion depends on its appeal to sentiments, emotions, ideals, which all of us acknowledge at all times, however passionately we may dispute their application to a particular case. Mr. Watson has already explained, in republishing some of his earlier political verse, that it is not all to be taken as necessarily expressing his present opinions, and that explanation still holds good. The question, however, is not of the poet's opinions, but of his power to present an ideal, and to contrast it with the accepted

creeds of so-called practical people. This is the test to which Mr. Watson's poems on public affairs must submit themselves, and I will only say here that they are so much part of his life and thought that any collection of his works which did not include a large number of them, or which endeavoured to censor them from the point of view of current opinion or popular prejudice, would do him serious injustice. These particular poems have, during a period of many agitations, played a conspicuous part in upholding an ideal which various causes had conspired to obscure.

There are a considerable number of new poems in this book—some of them, I think, ranking with the best of the poet's work—but it is not merely these which constitute its new features. The object in view has been to present Mr. Watson's poetry in a form which will enable the reader to judge it as a whole, and to arrange it in such a manner as will do justice to its salient characteristics. I go beyond my strict province when I praise the poet in his own book, but I

cannot forbear to express my opinion for what it is worth, that the work contained in these volumes enriches English poetry with a contribution of the highest value.

J. A. SPENDER.

LONDON,
December, 1904.

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[*The pieces marked with an asterisk have not appeared before in book form*].

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ELEGIAC POEMS

LACRIMÆ MUSARUM

(6TH OCTOBER, 1892)

Low, like another's, lies the laurelled head :
The life that seemed a perfect song is o'er :
Carry the last great bard to his last bed.
Land that he loved, thy noblest voice is mute.
Land that he loved, that loved him ! nevermore
Meadow of thine, smooth lawn or wild sea-shore,
Gardens of odorous bloom and tremulous fruit,
Or woodlands old, like Druid couches spread,
The master's feet shall tread.
Death's little rift hath rent the faultless lute :
The singer of undying songs is dead.

Lo, in this season pensive-hued and grave,
While fades and falls the doomed, reluctant leaf
From withered Earth's fantastic coronal,
With wandering sighs of forest and of wave
Mingles the murmur of a people's grief
For him whose leaf shall fade not, neither fall.

He hath fared forth, beyond these suns and showers.
For us, the autumn glow, the autumn flame,
And soon the winter silence shall be ours :
Him the eternal spring of fadeless fame
Crowns with no mortal flowers.

What needs his laurel our ephemeral tears,
To save from visitation of decay ?
Not in this temporal light alone, that bay
Blooms, nor to perishable mundane ears
Sings he with lips of transitory clay.
Rapt though he be from us,
Virgil salutes him, and Theocritus ;
Catullus, mightiest-brained Lucretius, each
Greets him, their brother, on the Stygian beach ;
Proudly a gaunt right hand doth Dante reach ;
Milton and Wordsworth bid him welcome home ;
Keats, on his lips the eternal rose of youth,
Doth in the name of Beauty that is Truth
A kinsman's love beseech ;
Coleridge, his locks aspersed with fairy foam,
Calm Spenser, Chaucer suave,
His equal friendship crave :
And godlike spirits hail him guest, in speech
Of Athens, Florence, Weimar, Stratford, Rome.

Nay, he returns to regions whence he came.
Him doth the spirit divine
Of universal loveliness reclaim.
All nature is his shrine.
Seek him henceforward in the wind and sea,
In earth's and air's emotion or repose,
In every star's august serenity,
And in the rapture of the flaming rose.
There seek him if ye would not seek in vain,
There, in the rhythm and music of the Whole ;
Yea, and for ever in the human soul
Made stronger and more beauteous by his strain.

For lo ! creation's self is one great choir,
And what is nature's order but the rhyme
Whereto in holiest unanimity
All things with all things move unfalteringly,
Infolded and communal from their prime ?
Who shall expound the mystery of the lyre ?
In far retreats of elemental mind
Obscurely comes and goes
The imperative breath of song, that as the wind
Is trackless, and oblivious whence it blows.
Demand of lilies wherefore they are white,
Extort her crimson secret from the rose,
But ask not of the Muse that she disclose

The meaning of the riddle of her might :
Somewhat of all things sealed and recondite,
Save the enigma of herself, she knows.
The master could not tell, with all his lore,
Wherefore he sang, or whence the mandate sped :
Ev'n as the linnet sings, so I, he said :
Ah, rather as the imperial nightingale,
That held in trance the ancient Attic shore,
And charms the ages with the notes that o'er
All woodland chants immortally prevail !
And now, from our vain plaudits greatly fled,
He with diviner silence dwells instead,
And on no earthly sea with transient roar,
Unto no earthly airs, he sets his sail,
But far beyond our vision and our hail
Is heard for ever and is seen no more.

No more, O never now,
Lord of the lofty and the tranquil brow,
Shall men behold those wizard locks where Time
Let fall no wintry rime.
Once, in his youth obscure,
The weaver of this verse, that shall endure
By splendour of its theme which cannot die,
Beheld thee eye to eye,
And touched through thee the hand

Of every hero of thy race divine,
Ev'n to the sire of all the laurelled line,
The sightless wanderer on the Ionian strand.
Yea, I beheld thee, and behold thee yet:
Thou hast forgotten, but can I forget?
Are not thy words all goldenly impressed
On memory's palimpsest?
I hear the utterance of thy sovereign tongue,
I tread the floor thy hallowing feet have trod;
I see the hands a nation's lyre that strung,
The eyes that looked through life and gazed on God.

The seasons change, the winds they shift and veer;
The grass of yesteryear
Is dead; the birds depart, the groves decay:
Empires dissolve and peoples disappear:
Song passes not away.
Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign;
The swords of Cæsars, they are less than rust:
The poet doth remain.
Dead is Augustus, Maro is alive;
And thou, the Mantuan of this age and soil,
With Virgil shalt survive,

Enriching Time with no less honeyed spoil,
The yielded sweet of every Muse's hive ;
Heeding no more the sound of idle praise
In that great calm our tumults cannot reach,—
Master who crown'st our immelodious days
With flower of perfect speech.

THE TOMB OF BURNS

WHAT woos the world to yonder shrine?
What sacred clay, what dust divine?
Was this some Master faultless-fine,
In whom we praise
The cunning of the jewelled line
And carven phrase?

A searcher of our source and goal,
A reader of God's secret scroll?
A Shakespeare, flashing o'er the whole
Of man's domain
The splendour of his cloudless soul
And perfect brain?

Some Keats, to Grecian gods allied,
Clasping all beauty as his bride?
Some Shelley, soaring dim-descried
Above Time's throng,
And heavenward hurling wild and wide
His spear of song?

A lonely Wordsworth, from the crowd
Half hid in light, half veiled in cloud ?
A sphere-born Milton, cold and proud,
In hallowing dews
Dipt, and with gorgeous ritual vowed
Unto the Muse ?

Nay, none of these,—and little skilled
On heavenly heights to sing and build !
Thine, thine, O Earth, whose fields he tilled,
And thine alone,
Was he whose fiery heart lies stilled
'Neath yonder stone.

He came when poets had forgot
How rich and strange the human lot ;
How warm the tints of Life ; how hot
Are Love and Hate ;
And what makes Truth divine, and what
Makes Manhood great.

A ghostly troop, in pale amaze
They melted 'neath that living gaze,—
His in whose spirit's gusty blaze
We seem to hear
The crackling of their phantom bays
Sapless and sere !

For, 'mid an age of dust and dearth,
Once more had bloomed immortal worth.
There, in the strong, splenetic North,
The Spring began.
A mighty mother had brought forth
A mighty man.

No mystic torch through Time he bore,
No virgin veil from Life he tore;
His soul no bright insignia wore
Of starry birth;
He saw what all men see—no more—
In heaven and earth:

But as, when thunder crashes nigh,
All darkness opes one flaming eye,
And the world leaps against the sky,—
So fiery-clear
Did the old truths that we pass by
To him appear.

How could he 'scape the doom of such
As feel the airiest phantom-touch
Keenlier than others feel the clutch
Of iron powers,—
Who die of having lived so much
In their large hours?

He erred, he sinned: and if there be
Who, from his hapless frailties free,
Rich in the poorer virtues, see
His faults alone,—
To such, O Lord of Charity,
Be mercy shown!

Singly he faced the bigot brood,
The meanly wise, the feebly good;
He pelted them with pearl, with mud;
He fought them well,—
But ah, the stupid million stood,
And he—he fell!

All bright and glorious at the start,
'Twas his ignobly to depart,
Slain by his own too affluent heart,
Too generous blood;
A voyager that lost Life's chart
In midmost flood.

So closes the fantastic fray,
The duel of the spirit and clay
So come bewildering disarray
And blurring gloom,
The irremediable day
And final doom.

So passes, all confusedly
As lights that hurry, shapes that flee
About some brink we dimly see,
The trivial, great,
Squalid, majestic tragedy
Of human fate.

Not ours to gauge the more or less,
The will's defect, the blood's excess,
The earthy humours that oppress
The radiant mind.
His greatness, not his littleness,
Concerns mankind.

A dreamer of the common dreams,
A fisher in familiar streams,
He chased the transitory gleams
That all pursue;
But on his lips the eternal themes
Again were new.

With shattering ire or withering mirth
He smote each worthless claim to worth.
The barren fig-tree cumbering Earth
He would not spare.
Through ancient lies of proudest birth
He drove his share.

To him the Powers that formed him brave,
Yet weak to breast the fatal wave,
A mighty gift of Hatred gave,—
A gift above
All other gifts benefic, save
The gift of Love.

He saw 'tis meet that Man possess
The will to curse as well as bless,
To pity—and be pitiless,
To make, and mar;
The fierceness that from tenderness
Is never far.

And so his fierce and tender strain
Lives, and his idlest words remain
To flout oblivion, that in vain
Strives to destroy
One lightest record of his pain
Or of his joy.

And though thrice statelier names decay;
His own can wither not away
While plighted lass and lad shall stray
Among the broom,
Where evening touches glen and brae
With rosy gloom;

THE TOMB OF BURNS

While Hope and Love with Youth abide;
While Age sits at the ingleside;
While yet there have not wholly died
The heroic fires,
The patriot passion, and the pride
In noble sires;

While, with the conquering Teuton breed
Whose fair estate of speech and deed
Heritors north and south of Tweed
Alike may claim,
The dimly mingled Celtic seed
Flowers like a flame;

While nations see in holy trance
That vision of the world's advance
Which glorified his countenance
When from afar
He hailed the Hope that shot o'er France
Its crimson star;

While, plumed for flight, the Soul deplores
The cage that foils the wing that soars;
And while, through adamantine doors
In dreams flung wide,
We hear, around these mortal shores,
The immortal tide.

ELEGIAC POEMS

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

I

THE old rude church, with bare, bald tower, is here;
Beneath its shadow high-born Rotha flows;
Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near,
And with cool murmur lulling his repose.

Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near.
His hills, his lakes, his streams are with him yet.
Surely the heart that read her own heart clear
Nature forgets not soon: 'tis we forget.

We that with vagrant soul his fixity
Have slighted; faithless, done his deep faith wrong;
Left him for poorer loves, and bowed the knee
To misbegotten strange new gods of song.

Yet, led by hollow ghost or beckoning elf
  Far from her homestead to the desert bourn,
The vagrant soul returning to herself
  Wearily wise, must needs to him return.

To him and to the powers that with him dwell :—
  Inflowings that divulged not whence they came ;
And that secluded Spirit unknowable,
  The mystery we make darker with a name ;

The Somewhat which we name but cannot know,
  Ev'n as we name a star and only see
His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
  And ever hide him, and which are not he.

II

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave !
  When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou then ?
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,
  The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men ?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine ;
Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view ;
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine ;
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends ?—
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and blaze,
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white languors to decline and cease ;
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight, and love : for these are parts of peace.

III

I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still ;—
If less divinely frenzied than of yore,
In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill
To simulate emotion felt no more.

Not such the authentic Presence pure, that made
This valley vocal in the great days gone !—
In *his* great days, while yet the spring-time played
About him, and the mighty morning shone.

No word-mosaic artificer, he sang
A lofty song of lowly weal and dole.
Right from the heart, right to the heart it sprang,
Or from the soul leapt instant to the soul.

He felt the charm of childhood, grace of youth,
Grandeur of age, insisting to be sung.
The impassioned argument was simple truth
Half-wondering at its own melodious tongue.

Impassioned ? ay, to the song's ecstatic core !
But far removed were clangour, storm and feud ;
For plenteous health was his, exceeding store
Of joy, and an impassioned quietude.

IV

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered down,
Put off her robe of sunlight, dew and flame,
And donned a modish dress to charm the Town.

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of things;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few strings;
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardour and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled,
She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

The human masque she watched, with dreamless eyes
In whose clear shallows lurked no trembling shade:
The stars, unkenned by her, might set and rise,
Unmarked by her, the daisies bloom and fade.

The age grew sated with her sterile wit.
Herself waxed weary on her loveless throne.
Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

For none the less, though song was but half true,
The world lay common, one abounding theme.
Man joyed and wept, and fate was ever new,
And love was sweet, life real, death no dream.

In sad, stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day.
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

It fluttered here and there, nor swept in vain
The dusty haunts where futile echoes dwell,—
Then, in a cadence soft as summer rain,
And sad from Auburn voiceless, drooped and fell.

It drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's field,
Found Poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick Nature's hem and go forth healed.

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering
share
Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew,
And o'er the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

Bright was his going forth, but clouds ere long
Whelmed him ; in gloom his radiance set, and
those
Twin morning stars of the new century's song,
Those morning stars that sang together, rose.

In elvish speech the *Dreamer* told his tale
Of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings.—
The *Seër* strayed not from earth's human pale,
But the mysterious face of common things

He mirrored as the moon in Rydal Mere
Is mirrored, when the breathless night hangs
blue :
Strangely remote she seems, and wondrous near,
And by some nameless difference born anew.

V

Peace—peace—and rest! Ah, how the lyre is loth,
Or powerless now, to give what all men seek!
Either it deadens with ignoble sloth
Or deafens with shrill tumult, loudly weak.

Where is the singer whose large notes and clear
Can heal, and arm, and plenish, and sustain?
Lo, one with empty music floods the ear,
And one, the heart refreshing, tires the brain.

And idly tuneful, the loquacious throng
Flutter and twitter, prodigal of time,
And little masters make a toy of song
Till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme.

And some go prankt in faded antique dress,
Abhorring to be hale and glad and free;
And some parade a conscious naturalness,
The scholar's not the child's simplicity.

Enough;—and wisest who from words forbear.
The gentle river rails not as it glides;
And suave and charitable, the winsome air
Chides not at all, or only him who chides.

VI

Nature! we storm thine ear with choric notes.
Thou answerest through the calm great nights and days,
'Laud me who will: not tuneless are your throats;
Yet if ye paused I should not miss the praise.'

We falter, half-rebuked, and sing again.
We chant thy desertness and haggard gloom,
Or with thy splendid wrath inflate the strain,
Or touch it with thy colour and perfume.

One, his melodious blood aflame for thee,
Wooed with fierce lust, his hot heart world-defiled.
One, with the upward eye of infancy,
Looked in thy face, and felt himself thy child.

Thee he approached without distrust or dread—
Beheld thee throned, an awful queen, above—
Climbed to thy lap and merely laid his head
Against thy warm wild heart of mother-love.

He heard that vast heart beating—thou didst press
Thy child so close, and lov'dst him unaware.
Thy beauty gladdened him; yet he scarce less
Had loved thee, had he never found thee fair!

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

For thou wast not as legendary lands
To which with curious eyes and ears we roam.
Nor wast thou as a fane 'mid solemn sands,
Where palmers halt at evening. Thou wast home.

And here, at home, still bides he ; but he sleeps ;
Not to be wakened even at thy word ;
Though we, vague dreamers, dream he somewhere keeps
An ear still open to thy voice still heard,—

Thy voice, as heretofore, about him blown,
For ever blown about his silence now ;
Thy voice, though deeper, yet so like his own
That almost, when he sang, we deemed 'twas thou !

VII

Behind Helm Crag and Silver Howe the sheen
Of the retreating day is less and less.
Soon will the lordlier summits, here unseen,
Gather the night about their nakedness.

The half-heard bleat of sheep comes from the hill.
  Faint sounds of childish play are in the air.
The river murmurs past. All else is still.
  The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,
  And life with toil and ancient pain depressed,
Here one may scarce believe the whole wide world
  Is not at peace, and all man's heart at rest.

Rest! 'twas the gift *he* gave; and peace! the shade
  He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun.
To him his bounties are come back—here laid
  In rest, in peace, his labour nobly done.

1884–87.

IN LALEHAM CHURCHYARD*

'Twas at this season, year by year,
The singer who lies songless here
Was wont to woo a less austere,
Less deep repose,
Where Rotha to Winandermere
Unresting flows,—

Flows through a land where torrents call
To far-off torrents as they fall,
And mountains in their cloudy pall
Keep ghostly state,
And Nature makes majestical
Man's lowliest fate.

There, 'mid the August glow, still came
He of the twice-illustrious name,

* The burial-place of Matthew Arnold.

The loud impertinence of fame
Not loth to flee—
Not loth with brooks and fells to claim
Fraternity.

Linked with his happy youthful lot,
Is Loughrigg, then, at last forgot?
Nor silent peak nor dalesman's cot
Looks on his grave.
Lulled by the Thames he sleeps, and not
By Rotha's wave.

'Tis fittest thus! for though with skill
He sang of beck and tarn and ghyll,
The deep, authentic mountain-thrill
Ne'er shook his page!
Somewhat of worldling mingled still
With bard and sage.

And 'twere less meet for him to lie
Guarded by summits lone and high
That traffic with the eternal sky
And hear, unawed,
The everlasting fingers ply
The loom of God;

Than, in this hamlet of the plain,
A less sublime repose to gain,
Where Nature, genial and urbane,
To man defers,
Yielding to us the right to reign,
Which yet is hers.

And nigh to where his bones abide,
The Thames with its unruffled tide
Seems like his genius typified,—
Its strength, its grace,
Its lucid gleam, its sober pride,
Its tranquil pace.

But ah! not his the eventual fate
Which doth the journeying wave await—
Doomed to resign its limpid state
And quickly grow
Turbid as passion, dark as hate,
And wide as woe.

Rather, it may be, over-much
He shunned the common stain and smutch,
From soilure of ignoble touch
Too grandly free,
Too lóftily secure in such
Cold purity.

But he preserved from chance control
The fortress of his 'stablisht soul;
In all things sought to see the Whole;
Brooked no disguise;
And set his heart upon the goal,
Not on the prize;

And with those few he shall survive
Who seem not to compete or strive,
Yet with the foremost still arrive,
Prevailing still:
The Elect with whom the stars connive
To work their will.

ODES AND LYRICS

HYMN TO THE SEA

I

GRANT, O regal in bounty, a subtle and delicate largess;
Grant an ethereal alms, out of the wealth of thy soul:
Suffer a tarrying minstrel, who finds, not fashions his numbers,—
Who, from the commune of air, cages the volatile song,—
Lightly to capture and prison some fugitive breath of thy descant,
Thine and his own as thy roar lisped on the lips of a shell,
Now while the vernal impulsion makes lyrical all that hath language,
While, through the veins of the Earth, riots the ichor of spring,

While, amid throes, amid raptures, with loosing of bonds, with unsealings,—
Arrowy pangs of delight, piercing the core of the world,—
Tremors and coy unfoldings, reluctances, sweet agitations,—
Youth, irrepressibly fair, wakes like a wondering rose.

II

Lover whose vehement kisses on lips irresponsive are squandered,
Lover that wooest in vain Earth's imperturbable heart;
Athlete mightily frustrate, who pittest thy thews against legions,
Locked with fantastical hosts, bodiless arms of the sky;
Sea that breakest for ever, that breakest and never art broken,
Like unto thine, from of old, springeth the spirit of man,—
Nature's wooer and fighter, whose years are a suit and a wrestling,

All their hours, from his birth, hot with desire and with fray ;
Amorist agonist man, that, immortally pining and striving,
Snatches the glory of life only from love and from war ;
Man that, rejoicing in conflict, like thee when precipitate tempest,
Charge after thundering charge, clangs on thy resonant mail,
Seemeth so easy to shatter, and proveth so hard to be cloven ;
Man whom the gods, in his pain, curse with a soul that endures ;
Man whose deeds, to the doer, come back as thine own exhalations
Into thy bosom return, weepings of mountain and vale ;
Man with the cosmic fortunes and starry vicissitudes tangled,
Chained to the wheel of the world, blind with the dust of its speed,
Even as thou, O giant, whom trailed in the wake of her conquests
Night's sweet despot draws, bound to her ivory car ;

Man with inviolate caverns, impregnable holds in his nature,
Depths no storm can pierce, pierced with a shaft of the sun :
Man that is galled with his confines, and burdened yet more with his vastness,
Born too great for his ends, never at peace with his goal ;
Man whom Fate, his victor, magnanimous, clement in triumph,
Holds as a captive king, mewed in a palace divine :
Many its leagues of pleasance, and ample of purview its windows ;
Airily falls, in its courts, laughter of fountains at play ;
Nought, when the harpers are harping, untimely reminds him of durance ;
None, as he sits at the feast, utters Captivity's name ;
But, would he parley with Silence, withdraw for awhile unattended,
Forth to the beckoning world 'scape for an hour and be free,
Lo, his adventurous fancy coercing at once and provoking,

Rise the unscalable walls, built with a word at the prime ;
Lo, in unslumbering watch, and with pitiless faces of iron,
Armed at each obstinate gate, stand the impassable guards.

III

Miser whose coffered recesses the spoils of eternity cumber,
Spendthrift foaming thy soul wildly in fury away,—
We, self-amorous mortals, our own multitudinous image
Seeking in all we behold, seek it and find it in thee :
Seek it and find it when o'er us the exquisite fabric of Silence
Perilous-turreted hangs, trembles and dulcetly falls ;
When the aërial armies engage amid orgies of music,
Braying of arrogant brass, whimper of querulous reeds ;
When, at his banquet, the Summer is purple and drowsed with repletion ;

When, to his anchorite board, taciturn Winter repairs ;
When by the tempest are scattered magnificent ashes of Autumn ;
When, upon orchard and lane, breaks the white foam of the Spring :
When, in extravagant revel, the Dawn, a bacchante upleaping,
Spills, on the tresses of Night, vintages golden and red ;
When, as a token at parting, munificent Day, for remembrance,
Gives, unto men that forget, Ophirs of fabulous ore ;
When, irresistibly rushing, in luminous palpitant deluge,
Hot from the summits of Life, poured is the lava of noon ;
When, as up yonder, thy mistress, at height of her mutable glories,
Wise from the magical East, comes like a sorceress pale.
Ah, she comes, she arises,—impassive, emotionless, bloodless,
Wasted and ashen of cheek, zoning her ruins with pearl.

Once she was warm, she was joyous, desire in her pulses abounding :
Surely thou lovedst her well, then, in her conquering youth !
Surely not all unimpassioned, at sound of thy rough serenading,
She, from the balconied night, unto her melodist leaned,—
Leaned unto thee, her bondsman, who keepest to-day her commandments,
All for the sake of old love, dead at thy heart though it lie.

IV

Yea, it is we, light perverts, that waver, and shift our allegiance ;
We, whom insurgence of blood dooms to be barren and waste ;
We, unto Nature imputing our frailties, our fever and tumult ;
We, that with dust of our strife sully the hue of her peace.
Thou, with punctual service, fulfillest thy task, being constant ;

Thine but to ponder the Law, labour and greatly obey :
Wherefore, with leapings of spirit, thou chantest the chant of the faithful,
Chantest aloud at thy toil, cleansing the Earth of her stain ;
Leagued in antiphonal chorus with stars and the populous Systems,
Following these as their feet dance to the rhyme of the Suns ;
Thou thyself but a billow, a ripple, a drop of that Ocean,
Which, labyrinthine of arm, folding us meshed in its coil,
Even as now, with elations, august exultations and ardours,
Shall, in unfaltering tide, pour its unanimous waves,
When, from this threshold of being, these steps of the Presence, this precinct,
Into the matrix of Life darkly divinely resumed,
Man and his littleness perish, erased like an error and cancelled,
Man and his greatness survive, lost in the greatness of God.

THE FIRST SKYLARK OF SPRING

Two worlds hast thou to dwell in, Sweet,—
The virginal untroubled sky,
And this vext region at my feet.—
Alas, but one have I !

To all my songs there clings the shade,
The dulling shade, of mundane care.
They amid mortal mists are made,—
Thine, in immortal air.

My heart is dashed with griefs and fears ;
My song comes fluttering, and is gone.
O high above the home of tears,
Eternal Joy, sing on !

Not loftiest bard, of mightiest mind,
Shall ever chant a note so pure,
Till he can cast this earth behind
And breathe in heaven secure.

We sing of Life, with stormy breath
That shakes the lute's distempered string:
We sing of Love, and loveless Death
Takes up the song we sing.

And born in toils of Fate's control,
Insurgent from the womb, we strive
With proud unmanumitted soul
To burst the golden gyve.

Thy spirit knows nor bounds nor bars;
On thee no shreds of thraldom hang:
Not more enlarged, the morning stars
Their great Te Deum sang.

But I am fettered to the sod,
And but forget my bonds an hour;
In amplitude of dreams a god,
A slave in dearth of power.

And fruitless knowledge clouds my soul,
And fretful ignorance irks it more.
Thou sing'st as if thou knew'st the whole,
And lightly held'st thy lore!

Somewhat as thou, Man once could sing,
In porches of the lucent morn,

Ere he had felt his lack of wing,
Or cursed his iron bourn.

The springtime bubbled in his throat,
The sweet sky seemed not far above,
And young and lovesome came the note ;—
Ah, thine is Youth and Love !

Thou sing'st of what he knew of old,
And dreamlike from afar recalls ;
In flashes of forgotten gold
An orient glory falls.

And as he listens, one by one
Life's utmost splendours blaze more nigh ;
Less inaccessible the sun,
Less alien grows the sky.

For thou art native to the spheres,
And of the courts of heaven art free,
And carriest to his temporal ears
News from eternity ;

And lead'st him to the dizzy verge,
And lur'st him o'er the dazzling line,
Where mortal and immortal merge,
And human dies divine.

AUTUMN

Thou burden of all songs the earth hath sung,
Thou retrospect in Time's reverted eyes,
Thou metaphor of everything that dies,
That dies ill-starred, or dies beloved and young
And therefore blest and wise,—
O be less beautiful, or be less brief,
Thou tragic splendour, strange, and full of fear!
In vain her pageant shall the Summer rear?
At thy mute signal, leaf by golden leaf,
Crumbles the gorgeous year.

Ah, ghostly as remembered mirth, the tale
Of Summer's bloom, the legend of the Spring!
And thou, too, flutterest an impatient wing,
Thou presence yet more fugitive and frail,
Thou most unbodied thing,

AUTUMN

Whose very being is thy going hence,
And passage and departure all thy theme;
Whose life doth still a splendid dying seem
And thou at height of thy magnificence
A figment and a dream.

Stilled is the virgin rapture that was June,
And cold is August's panting heart of fire;
And in the storm-dismantled forest-choir
For thine own elegy thy winds attune
Their wild and wizard lyre:
And poignant grows the charm of thy decay,
The pathos of thy beauty, and the sting,
Thou parable of greatness vanishing!
For me, thy woods of gold and skies of grey
With speech fantastic ring.

For me, to dreams resigned, there come and go,
'Twixt mountains draped and hooded night and morn,
Elusive notes in wandering wafture borne,
From undiscoverable lips that blow
An immaterial horn;

And spectral seem thy winter-boding trees,
Thy ruinous bowers and drifted foliage wet—
O Past and Future in sad bridal met,
O voice of everything that perishes,
And soul of all regret!

ODE IN MAY

Let me go forth, and share
The overflowing Sun
With one wise friend, or one
Better than wise, being fair,
Where the pewit wheels and dips
On heights of bracken and ling,
And Earth, unto her leaflet tips,
Tingles with the Spring.

What is so sweet and dear
As a prosperous morn in May,
The confident prime of the day,
And the dauntless youth of the year,
When nothing that asks for bliss,
Asking aright, is denied,
And half of the world a bridegroom is,
And half of the world a bride ?

The Song of Mingling flows,
Grave, ceremonial, pure,
As once, from lips that endure,
The cosmic descant rose,
When the temporal lord of life,
Going his golden way,
Had taken a wondrous maid to wife
That long had said him nay.

For of old the Sun, our sire,
Came wooing the mother of men,
Earth, that was virginal then,
Vestal fire to his fire.
Silent her bosom and coy,
But the strong god sued and pressed;
And born of their starry nuptial joy
Are all that drink of her breast.

And the triumph of him that begot,
And the travail of her that bore,
Behold, they are evermore
As warp and weft in our lot.
We are children of splendour and flame,
Of shuddering, also, and tears.
Magnificent out of the dust we came,
And abject from the Spheres.

ODE IN MAY

O bright irresistible lord,
We are fruit of Earth's womb, each one,
And fruit of thy loins, O Sun,
Whence first was the seed outpoured.
To thee as our Father we bow,
Forbidden thy Father to see,
Who is older and greater than thou, as thou
Art greater and older than we.

Thou art but as a word of his speech,
Thou art but as a wave of his hand;
Thou art brief as a glitter of sand
'Twixt tide and tide on his beach;
Thou art less than a spark of his fire,
Or a moment's mood of his soul:
Thou art lost in the notes on the lips of his
choir
That chant the chant of the Whole.

TO LICINIUS

(HORACE II. X.)

LICINIUS, wouldst thou wisely steer
The pinnace of thy soul,
Not always trust her without fear
Where deep-sea billows roll;
Nor, to the sheltered beach too near,
Risk shipwreck on the shoal.

Who sees in fortune's golden mean
All his desires comprised,
Midway the cot and court between
Hath well his life devised;
For riches, hath not envied been,
Nor, for their lack, despised.

Most rocks the pine that soars afar,
When leaves are tempest-whirled.

TO LICINIUS

Direst the crash when turrets are
In dusty ruin hurled.
The thunder loveth best to scar
The bright brows of the world.

The steadfast mind, that to the end
Is fortune's victor still,
Hath yet a fear, though Fate befriend,
A hope, though all seem ill.
Jove can at will the winter send,
Or call the spring at will.

Full oft the darkest day may be
Of morrows bright the sire.
His bow not everlastingly
Apollo bends in ire.
At times the silent Muses he
Wakes with his dulcet lyre.

When life's straits roar and hem thee sore,
Be bold ; naught else avails.
But when thy canvas swells before
Too proudly prospering gales,
For once be wise with coward's lore,
And timely reef thy sails.

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY

(4TH·AUGUST, 1892)

WITHIN a narrow span of time,
Three princes of the realm of rhyme,
At height of youth or manhood's prime
From earth took wing,
To join the fellowship sublime
Who, dead, yet sing.

He, first, his earliest wreath who wove
Of laurel grown in Latmian grove,
Conquered by pain and hapless love
Found calmer home,
Roofed by the heaven that glows above
Eternal Rome.

A fierier soul, its own fierce prey,
And cumbered with more mortal clay,
At Missolonghi flamed away,
And left the air
Reverberating to this day
Its loud despair.

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY

Alike remote from Byron's scorn
And Keats's magic as of morn
Bursting for ever newly-born
On forests old,
To wake a hoary world forlorn
With touch of gold,

Shelley, the cloud-begot, who grew
Nourished on air and sun and dew,
Into that Essence whence he drew
His life and lyre
Was fittingly resolved anew
Through wave and fire.

'Twas like his rapid soul! 'Twas meet
That he, who brooked not Time's slow feet,
With passage thus abrupt and fleet
Should hurry hence,
Eager the Great Perhaps to greet
With Why? and Whence?

Impatient of the world's fixed way,
He ne'er could suffer God's delay,
But all the future in a day
Would build divine,
And the whole past in ruins lay,
An emptied shrine.

Vain vision! but the glow, the fire,
The passion of benign desire,
The glorious yearning, lift him higher
Than many a soul
That mounts a million paces nigher
Its meaner goal.

And power is his, if naught besides,
In that thin ether where he rides,
Above the roar of human tides
To ascend afar,
Lost in a storm of light that hides
His dizzy car.

Below, the unhasting world toils on,
And here and there are victories won,
Some dragon slain, some justice done,
While, through the skies,
A meteor rushing on the sun,
He flares and dies.

But, as he cleaves yon ether clear,
Notes from the unattempted Sphere
He scatters to the enchanted ear
Of Earth's dim throng,
Whose dissonance doth more endear
The showering song.

In other shapes than he forecast,
The world is moulded : his fierce blast,—
His wild assault upon the Past,—
These things are vain ;
Revolt is transient : what shall last
Is that pure strain,

Which seems the wandering voices blent
Of every virgin element,—
A sound from ocean caverns sent,—
An airy call
From the pavilioned firmament
O'erdoming all.

And in this world of worldlings, where
Souls rust in apathy, and ne'er
A great emotion shakes the air,
And life flags tame,
And rare is noble impulse, rare
The impassioned aim,

'Tis no mean fortune to have heard
A singer who, if errors blurred
His sight, had yet a spirit stirred
By vast desire,
And ardour fledging the swift word
With plumes of fire.

A creature of impetuous breath,
Our torpor deadlier than death
He knew not; whatsoe'er he saith
Flashes with life:
He spurreth men, he quickeneth
To splendid strife.

And in his gusts of song he brings
Wild odours shaken from strange wings,
And unfamiliar whisperings
From far lips blown,
While all the rapturous heart of things
Throbs through his own,—

His own that from the burning pyre
One who had loved his wind-swept lyre
Out of the sharp teeth of the fire
Unmolten drew,
Beside the sea that in her ire
Smote him and slew.

TO ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

In that grave shade august
That round your Eton clings,
To you the centuries must
Be visible corporate things,
And the high Past appear
Affably real and near,
For all its grandiose airs, caught from the mien of Kings.

The new age stands as yet
Half built against the sky,
Open to every threat
Of storms that clamour by:
Scaffolding veils the walls,
And dim dust floats and falls,
As, moving to and fro, their task the masons ply.

But, changeless and complete,
Rise unperturbed and vast,
Above our din and heat,
The turrets of the Past,
Mute as that city asleep,
Lulled with enchantments deep,
Far in Arabian dreamland, built where all things last.

Who loves not to explore
That palace of Old Time,
Awed by the spires that soar
In ghostly dusk sublime,
And gorgeous-windowed halls,
And leagues of pictured walls,
And dungeons that remember many a crimson crime?

Yet, in those phantom-towers
Not thine, not mine, to dwell,
Rapt from the living hours
By some rich lotus-spell;
And if our lute obey
A mode of yesterday,
'Tis that we deem 'twill prove to-morrow's mode as well.

TO ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

This neighbouring joy and woe—
  This present sky and sea—
These men and things we know,
  Whose touch we would not flee—
To us, O friend, shall long
Yield aliment of song:
Life as I see it lived is great enough for me.

In high relief against
  That reverend silence set,
Wherein your days are fenced
  From the world's peevish fret,
There breaks on old Earth's ears
The thunder of new years,
Rousing from ancient dreams the Muse's anchoret.

Well if the coming time,
  With loud and strident tongue,
Hush not the sound of rhyme,
  Drown not the song half sung,
Ev'n as a dissonant age
Choked with polemic rage
The starriest voice that e'er on England's ears hath rung,

And bade her seer a while
Pause and put by the bard,
Till this tormented isle,
With feuds and factions jarred,
Some leisure might regain
To hear the long-pent strain
Re-risen from storm and fire, immortal and unmarred.

THE RAVEN'S SHADOW

Seabird, elemental sprite,
  Moulded of the sun and spray—
Raven, dreary flake of night
  Drifting in the eye of day—
What in common have ye two,
Meeting 'twixt the blue and blue?

Thou to eastward carriest
  The keen savour of the foam,—
Thou dost bear unto the west
  Fragrance from thy woody home,
Where perchance a house is thine
Odorous of the oozy pine.

Eastward thee thy proper cares,
  Things of mighty moment, call;
Thee to westward thine affairs
  Summon, weighty matters all:
I, where land and sea contest,
Watch you eastward, watch you west,

Till, in snares of fancy caught,
  Mystically changed ye seem,
And the bird becomes a thought,
  And the thought becomes a dream
And the dream, outspread on high,
Lords it o'er the abject sky.

Surely I have known before
  Phantoms of the shapes ye be—
Haunters of another shore
  'Leaguered by another sea.
There my wanderings night and morn
Reconcile me to the bourn.

There the bird of happy wings
  Wafts the ocean-news I crave;
Rumours of an isle he brings
  Gemlike on the golden wave:
But the baleful beak and plume
Scatter immelodious gloom.

Though the flow'rs be faultless made,
  Perfectly to live and die—
Though the cloudlets bloom and fade
  Flow'rlike 'midst a meadowy sky—
Where this raven roams forlorn
Veins of midnight flaw the morn.

THE RAVEN'S SHADOW

He not less will croak and croak
  As he ever caws and caws,
Till the starry dance be broke,
  Till the sphery pæan pause,
And the universal chime
Falter out of tune and time.

Coils the labyrinthine sea,
  Duteous to the lunar will,
But some discord stealthily
  Vexes the world-ditty still,
And the bird that caws and caws
Clasps creation with his claws.

THY voice from inmost dreamland calls ;
  The wastes of sleep thou makest fair ;
Bright o'er the ridge of darkness falls
  The cataract of thy hair.

The morn renews its golden birth :
  Thou with the vanquished night dost fade ;
And leav'st the ponderable earth
  Less real than thy shade.

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

I

ENGLAND my mother,
Wardress of waters,
Builder of peoples,
Maker of men,—

Hast thou yet leisure
Left for the muses?
Heed'st thou the songsmith
Forging the rhyme?

Deafened with tumults,
How canst thou hearken?
Strident is faction,
Demos is loud.

Lazarus, hungry,
Menaces Dives;
Labour the giant
Chafes in his hold.

Yet do the songsmiths
Quit not their forges ;
Still on life's anvil
Forge they the rhyme.

Still the rapt faces
Glow from the furnace :
Breath of the smithy
Scorches their brows.

Yea, and thou hear'st them ?
So shall the hammers
Fashion not vainly
Verses of gold.

II

Lo, with the ancient
Roots of man's nature,
Twines the eternal
Passion of song.

Ever Love fans it,
Ever Life feeds it ;
Time cannot age it,
Death cannot slay,

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

Deep in the world-heart
Stand its foundations,
Tangled with all things,
  Twin-made with all.

Nay, what is Nature's
Self, but an endless
Strife toward music,
  Euphony, rhyme ?

Trees in their blooming,
Tides in their flowing,
Stars in their circling,
  Tremble with song.

God on His throne is
Eldest of poets :
Unto His measures
  Moveth the Whole.

III

Therefore deride not
Speech of the muses,
England my mother,
  Maker of men.

Nations are mortal,
Fragile is greatness ;
Fortune may fly thee,
Song shall not fly.

Song the all-girdling,
Song cannot perish :
Men shall make music,
Man shall give ear.

Not while the choric
Chant of creation
Floweth from all things,
Poured without pause,

Cease we to echo
Faintly the descant
Whereto for ever
Dances the world.

IV

So let the songsmith
Proffer his rhyme-gift,
England my mother,
Maker of men.

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

Grey grows thy count'nance,
Full of the ages ;
Time on thy forehead
Sits like a dream :

Song is the potion
All things renewing,
Youth's one elixir,
Fountain of morn.

Thou, at the world-loom
Weaving thy future,
Fitly may'st temper
Toil with delight.

Deemest thou, labour
Only is earnest ?
Grave is all beauty,
Solemn is joy.

Song is no bauble—
Slight not the songsmith,
England my mother,
Maker of men.

THE FLIGHT OF YOUTH

Youth ! ere thou be flown away,
Surely one last boon to-day
Thou'lt bestow—
One last light of rapture give,
Rich and lordly fugitive !
Ere thou go.

What, thou canst not ? What, all spent ?
All thy spells of ravishment
Pow'rless now ?
Gone thy magic out of date ?
Gone, all gone that made thee great ?—
Follow thou !

Nay, bid me not my cares to leave,
Who cannot from their shadow flee.
I do but win a short reprieve,
'Scaping to pleasure and to thee.

I may, at best, a moment's grace,
And grant of liberty, obtain ;
And respited a little space,
Must go back into bonds again.

THE KEY-BOARD

Five-and-thirty black slaves,
  Half-a-hundred white,
All their duty but to sing
  For their Queen's delight,
Now with throats of thunder,
  Now with dulcet lips,
While she rules them royally
  With her finger-tips!

When she quits her palace,
  All the slaves are dumb—
Dumb with dolour till the Queen
  Back to Court is come:
Dumb the throats of thunder,
  Dumb the dulcet lips,
Lacking all the sovereignty
  Of her finger-tips.

THE KEY-BOARD

Dusky slaves and pallid,
  Ebon slaves and white,
When the Queen was on her throne
  How you sang to-night!
Ah, the throats of thunder!
  Ah, the dulcet lips!
Ah, the gracious tyrannies
  Of her finger-tips!

Silent, silent, silent,
  All your voices now;
Was it then her life alone
  Did your life endow?
Waken, throats of thunder!
  Waken, dulcet lips!
Touched to immortality
  By her finger-tips.

SCENTLESS flow'rs I bring thee—yet
In thy bosom be they set ;
In thy bosom each one grows
Fragrant beyond any rose.

Sweet enough were she who could,
In thy heart's sweet neighbourhood,
Some redundant sweetness thus
Borrow from that overplus.

UNDER the dark and piny steep
We watched the storm crash by :
We saw the bright brand leap and leap
Out of the shattered sky.

The elements were minist'ring
To make one mortal blest ;
For, peal by peal, you did but cling
The closer to his breast.

LIBERTY REJECTED

About this heart thou hast
  Thy chains made fast,
And think'st thou I would be
  Therefrom set free,
And forth unbound be cast?

The ocean would as soon
  Entreat the moon
Unsay the magic verse
  That seals him hers
From silver noon to noon.

She stooped her pearly head
  Seaward, and said:
'Would'st thou I gave to thee
  Thy liberty,
In Time's youth forfeited?'

LIBERTY REJECTED

And from his inmost hold
The answer rolled :
'Thy bondman to remain
Is sweeter pain,
Dearer an hundredfold.'

RELUCTANT SUMMER

Reluctant Summer! once, a maid
Full easy of access,
In many a bee-frequented shade
Thou didst thy lover bless.
Divinely unreproved I played,
Then, with each liberal tress—
And art thou grown at last afraid
Of some too close caress?

Or deem'st that if thou shouldst abide,
My passion might decay?
Thou leav'st me pining and denied,
Coyly thou say'st me nay.
Ev'n as I woo thee to my side,
Thou, importuned to stay,
Like Orpheus' half-recovered bride
Ebb'st from my arms away.

BEAUTY'S METEMPSYCHOSIS

THAT beauty such as thine
Should die indeed,
Were ordinance too wantonly malign !
No wit may reconcile so cold a creed
With beauty such as thine.

From wave and star and flower
Some effluence rare
Was lent thee, a divine but transient dower :
Thou yield'st it back from eyes and lips and hair
To wave and star and flower.

Shouldst thou to-morrow die,
Thou still shalt be
Found in the rose and met in all the sky :
And from the ocean's heart shalt sing to me,
Shouldst thou to-morrow die.

WHEN birds were songless on the bough,
I heard thee sing.
The world was full of winter, thou
Wert full of spring.

To-day the world's heart feels anew
The vernal thrill,
And thine beneath the rueful yew
Is wintry chill.

NIGHT

In the night, in the night,
When thou liest alone,
Ah, the sounds that are blown
In the freaks of the breeze,
By the spirit that sends
The voice of far friends
With the sigh of the seas
In the night!

In the night, in the night,
When thou liest alone,
Ah, the ghosts that make moan
From the days that are sped:
The old dreams, the old deeds,
The old wound that still bleeds,
And the face of the dead
In the night!

In the night, in the night,
When thou liest alone,
With the grass and the stone
O'er thy chamber so deep,
Ah, the silence at last,
Life's dissonance past,
And only pure sleep
In the night!

THE PROTEST

Bid me no more to other eyes
With wandering worship fare,
And weave my numbers garland-wise
To crown another's hair.
On me no more a mandate lay
Thou wouldst not have me to obey!

Bid me no more to leave unkissed
That rose-wreathed porch of pearl.
Shall I, where'er the winds may list,
Give them my life to whirl?
Perchance too late thou wilt be fain
Thy exile to recall—in vain.

Bid me no more from thee depart,
For in thy voice to-day
I hear the tremor of thy heart
Entreating me to stay;
I hear . . . nay, silence tells it best,
O yielded lips, O captive breast!

SONG IN AN ARCHAIC MANNER

Sweetest sweets that Time hath rifled,
  Live anew on lyric tongue—
Tresses with which Paris trifled,
  Lips to Antony's that clung.
These surrender not their rose,
Nor their golden puissance those.

Vain the envious loam that covers
  Her of Egypt, her of Troy
Helen's, Cleopatra's lovers
  Still desire them, still enjoy.
Fate but stole what Song restored
Vain the aspic, vain the cord.

Idly clanged the sullen portal,
  Idly the sepulchral door :
Fame the mighty, Love the im[illegible]
  These than foolish dust are [illegible]
Nor may captive Death refuse
Homage to the conquering Mu[illegible]

TELL ME NOT NOW

TELL me not now, if love for love
Thou canst return,—
Now while around us and above
Day's flambeaux burn.
Not in clear noon, with speech as clear,
Thy heart avow,
For every gossip wind to hear;
Tell me not now!

Tell me not now the tidings sweet,
The news divine;
A little longer at thy feet
Leave me to pine.
I would not have the gadding bird
Hear from his bough;
Nay, though I famish for a word,
Tell me not now!

But when deep trances of delight
All Nature seal,
When round the world the arms of Night
Caressing steal,
When rose to dreaming rose says, '*Dear*,
Dearest,'—and when
Heaven sighs her secret in Earth's ear,
Ah, tell me then !

I do not ask to have my fill
Of wine, or love, or fame.
I do not, for a little ill,
Against the gods exclaim.

One boon of Fortune I implore,
With one petition kneel:
At least caress me not, before
Thou break me on thy wheel.

THE LURE

Come hither and behold them, Sweet—
  The cloudy prow that o'er us rides,
And white sails of a fairy Fleet
  On elfin tides.

Come hither and behold them, Sweet—
  The lustrous gloom, the vivid shade,
The throats of love that burn and beat
  And shake the glade.

Come, for the hearts of all things pine,
  And all the paths desire thy feet,
And all this beauty asks for thine.
  As I do, Sweet!

SONG

April, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears!
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears,
April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter,
But, the moment after,
Weep thy golden tears!

SONG

O, LIKE a queen's her happy tread,
And like a queen's her golden head!
But O, at last, when all is said,
Her woman's heart for me!

We wandered where the river gleamed
'Neath oaks that mused and pines that dreamed.
A wild thing of the woods she seemed,
So proud, and pure, and free!

All heaven drew nigh to hear her sing,
When from her lips her soul took wing;
The oaks forgot their pondering,
The pines their reverie.

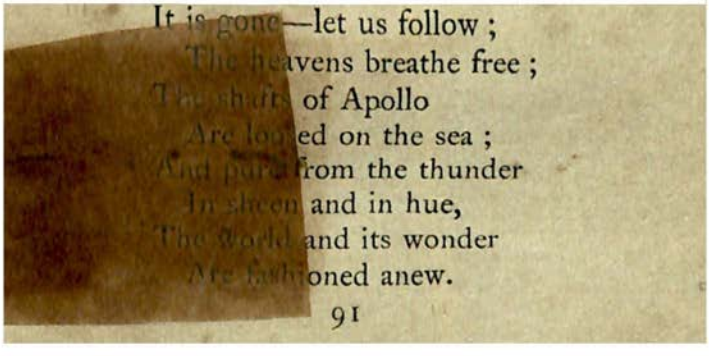
And O, her happy queenly tread,
And O, her queenly golden head!
But O, her heart, when all is said,
Her woman's heart for me!

A SONG OF SHOWER AND SHINE

I

Let us home and take shelter,
While romps on the plain
Like a herd helter-skelter
The galloping rain;
For the thunderclouds blacken,
And drench as they pass
The deer in the bracken,
The kine in the grass.

II


It is gone—let us follow;
The heavens breathe free;
The shafts of Apollo
Are loosed on the sea;
And pure from the thunder
In sheen and in hue,
The world and its wonder
Are fashioned anew.

THE LUTE-PLAYER

SHE was a lady great and splendid,
I was a minstrel in her halls.
A warrior like a prince attended
Stayed his steed by the castle walls.

Far had he fared to gaze upon her.
'O rest thee now, Sir Knight,' she said.
The warrior wooed, the warrior won her;
In time of snowdrops they were wed.
I made sweet music in his honour,
And longed to strike him dead.

I passed at midnight from her portal,
Throughout the world till death I rove:
Ah, let me make this lute immortal
With rapture of my hate and love!

WELL he slumbers, greatly slain,
Who in splendid battle dies;
Deep his sleep in midmost main
Pillowed upon pearl who lies.

Ease, of all good gifts the best,
War and wave at last decree,
Love alone denying rest,
Crueller than sword or sea.

THE NORTH HAS MY HEART

'The land that lies eastward, the land that lies
west,
The northland, the southland, which lovest thou
best?'
'To eastward, to westward, to southward I stray,
But the North has my heart at the end of the
way.'

'Like a pearl is the East when the morn is
begun,
And the West is a rose at the set of the sun,
And winsome the South is and golden all day—'
'But the North has my heart at the end of the
way.'

'The East has her streams, and the West her
white foam,
And the South her bland welcome to Spring trip-
ping home—'

THE NORTH HAS MY HEART

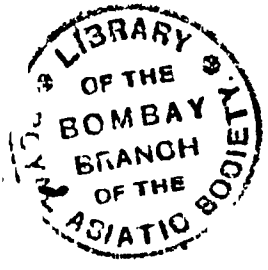
'But the North has her mountains, and dearest are they,
And the North has my heart, to the end of the way.'

LEAVETAKING

Pass, thou wild light,
Wild light on peaks that so
Grieve to let go
The day.
Lovely thy tarrying, lovely too is night:
Pass thou away.

Pass, thou wild heart,
Wild heart of youth that still
Hast half a will
To stay.
I grow too old a comrade, let us part.
Pass thou away.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS



APOLOGIA

Thus much I know: what dues soe'er be mine,
Of fame or of oblivion, Time the just,
Punctiliously assessing, shall award.
This have I doubted never; this is sure.
But one meanwhile shall chide me,—one shall curl
Superior lips,—because my handiwork,
The issue of my solitary toil,
The harvest of my spirit, even these
My numbers, are not something, good or ill,
Other than I have ever striven, in years
Lit by a conscious and a patient aim,
With hopes and with despairs, to fashion them;
Or, it may be, because I have full oft
In singers' selves found me a theme of song,
Holding these also to be very part
Of Nature's greatness, and accounting not
Their descants least heroical of deeds;
Or, yet again, because I bring nought new,
Save as each noontide or each Spring is new,

Into an old and iterative world,
And can but proffer unto whoso will
A cool and nowise turbid cup, from wells
Our fathers digged; and have not thought it shame
To tread in nobler footprints than mine own,
And travel by the light of purer eyes.
Ev'n such offences am I charged withal,
Till, breaking silence, I am moved to cry,
What would ye, then, my masters? Is the Muse
Fall'n to a thing of Mode, that must each year
Supplant her derelict self of yester-year?
Or do the mighty voices of old days
At last so tedious grow, that one whose lips
Inherit some far echo of their tones—
How far, how faint, none better knows than he
Who hath been nourished on their utterance—can
But irk the ears of such as care no more
The accent of dead greatness to recall?
If, with an ape's ambition, I rehearse
Their gestures, trick me in their stolen robes,
The sorry mime of their nobility,
Dishonouring whom I vainly emulate,
The poor imposture soon shall shrink revealed
In the ill grace with which their gems bestar
An abject brow: but if I be indeed

Their true descendant, as the veriest hind
May yet be sprung of kings, their lineaments
Will out, the signature of ancestry
Leap unobscured, and somewhat of themselves
In me, their lowly scion, live once more.
With grateful, not vainglorious joy, I dreamed
It did so live ; and ev'n such pride was mine
As is next neighbour to humility.
For he that claims high lineage yet may feel
How thinned in the transmission is become
The ancient blood he boasts ; how slight he stands
In the great shade of his majestic sires.
But it was mine endeavour so to sing
As if these lofty ones a moment stooped
From their still spheres, and undisdainful graced
My note with audience, nor incurious heard
Whether, degenerate irredeemably,
The faltering minstrel shamed his starry kin.
And though I be to these but as a knoll
About the feet of the high mountains, scarce
Remarked at all save when a valley cloud
Holds the high mountains hidden, and the knoll
Against the cloud shows briefly eminent ;
Yet ev'n as they, I too, with constant heart,
And with no light or careless ministry,

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Have served what seemed the Voice ; and un-
profane,
Have dedicated to melodious ends
All of myself that least ignoble was.
For though of faulty and of erring walk,
I have not suffered aught in me of frail
To blur my song ; I have not paid the world
The evil and the insolent courtesy
Of offering it my baseness for a gift.
And unto such as think all Art is cold,
All music unimpassioned, if it breathe
An ardour not of Eros' lips, and glow
With fire not caught from Aphrodite's breast,
Be it enough to say, that in Man's life
Is room for great emotions unbegot
Of dalliance and embracement, unbegot
Ev'n of the purer nuptials of the soul ;
And one not pale of blood, to human touch
Not tardily responsive, yet may know
A deeper transport and a mightier thrill
Than comes of commerce with mortality,
When, rapt from all relation with his kind,
All temporal and immediate circumstance,
In silence, in the visionary mood
That, flashing light on the dark deep, perceives
Order beyond this coil and errancy,

APOLOGIA

Isled from the fretful hour he stands alone
And hears the eternal movement, and beholds
Above him and around and at his feet,
In million-billowed consentaneousness,
The flowing, flowing, flowing of the world.

Such moments, are they not the peaks of life ?
Enough for me, if on these pages fall
The shadow of the summits, and an air
Not dim from human hearth-fires sometimes blow.

WORLD-STRANGENESS

Strange the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my Host can ne'er espy,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

So, between the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease.

VITA NUOVA

Long hath she slept, forgetful of delight:
At last, at last, the enchanted princess, Earth,
Claimed with a kiss by Spring the adventurer,
In slumber knows the destined lips, and thrilled
Through all the deeps of her unageing heart
With passionate necessity of joy,
Wakens, and yields her loveliness to love.

O ancient streams, O far-descended woods
Full of the fluttering of melodious souls;
O hills and valleys that adorn yourselves
In solemn jubilation; winds and clouds,
Ocean and land in stormy nuptials clasped,
And all exuberant creatures that acclaim
The Earth's divine renewal: lo, I too
With yours would mingle somewhat of glad song.
I too have come through wintry terrors,—yea,
Through tempest and through cataclysm of soul
Have come, and am delivered. Me the Spring,
Me also, dimly with new life hath touched,

And with regenerate hope, the salt of life ;
And I would dedicate these thankful tears
To whatsoever Power beneficent,
Veiled though his countenance, undivulged his thought,
Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
Into the gracious air and vernal morn,
And suffers me to know my spirit a note
Of this great chorus, one with bird and stream
And voiceful mountain,—nay, a string, how jarred
And all but broken ! of that lyre of life
Whereon himself, the master harp-player,
Resolving all its mortal dissonance
To one immortal and most perfect strain,
Harps without pause, building with song the world.

18TH MARCH, 1893.

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

I

Old emperor Yew, fantastic sire,
  Girt with thy guard of dotard kings,—
What ages hast thou seen retire
  Into the dusk of alien things?
What mighty news hath stormed thy shade,
Of armies perished, realms unmade?

Already wast thou great and wise,
  And solemn with exceeding eld,
On that proud morn when England's eyes,
  Wet with tempestuous joy, beheld
Round her rough coasts the thundering main
Strewn with the ruined dream of Spain.

Hardly thou count'st them long ago,
  The warring faiths, the wavering land,

The sanguine sky's delirious glow,
And Cranmer's scorched, uplifted hand.
Wailed not the woods their task of shame,
Doomed to provide the insensate flame? ..

Iourned not the rumouring winds when she,
The sweet queen of a tragic hour,
Crowned with her snow-white memory
The crimson legend of the Tower?
Or when a thousand witcheries lay
Felled with one stroke, at Fotheringay?

Ah, thou hast heard the iron tread
And clang of many an armoured age,
And well recall'st the famous dead,
Captains or counsellors brave or sage,
Kings that on kings their myriads hurled,
Ladies whose smile embroiled the world.

Rememberest thou the perfect knight,
The soldier, courtier, bard in one,
Sidney, that pensive Hesper-light
O'er Chivalry's departed sun?
Knew'st thou the virtue, sweetness, lore,
Whose nobly hapless name was More?

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

The roystering prince, that afterward
  Belied his madcap youth, and proved
A greatly simple warrior lord
  Such as our warrior fathers loved—
Lives he not still? for Shakespeare sings
The last of our adventurer kings.

His battles o'er, he takes his ease,
  Glory put by, and sceptred toil.
Round him the carven centuries
  Like forest branches arch and coil.
In that dim fane, he is not sure
Who lost or won at Azincour!

Roofed by the mother minster vast
  That guards Augustine's rugged throne,
The darling of a knightly Past
  Sleeps in his bed of sculptured stone,
And flings, o'er many a warlike tale,
The shadow of his dusky mail.

The monarch who, albeit his crown
  Graced an august and sapient head,
Rode roughshod to a stained renown
  O'er Wallace and Llewellyn dead,
And eased at last by Solway strand
His restless heart and ruthless hand;

Or that disastrous king on whom
  Fate, like a tempest, early fell,
And the dark secret of whose doom
  The Keep of Pomfret kept full well;
Or him whose lightly leaping words
On Becket drew the dastard swords;

Or Eleanor's undaunted son,
  That, starred with idle glory, came
Bearing from 'leaguered Ascalon
  The barren splendour of his fame,
And, vanquished by an unknown bow,
Lies vainly great at Fontevraud;

Or him, the footprints of whose power
  Made mightier whom he overthrew;
A man built like a mountain-tower,
  A fortress of heroic thew;
The Conqueror, in our soil who set
This stem of Kinghood flowering yet;—

These, or the living fame of these,
  Perhaps thou minglest—who shall say?—
With thrice remoter memories,
  And phantoms of the mistier day,
Long ere the tanner's daughter's son
From Harold's hands this realm had won.

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

What years are thine, not mine to guess!
The stars look youthful, thou being by
Youthful the sun's glad-heartedness;
Witless of time the unageing sky!
And these dim-groping roots around
So deep a human Past are wound,

That, musing in thy shade, for me
The tidings scarce would strangely fall
Of fair-haired despots of the sea
Scaling our eastern island-wall,
From their long ships of norland pine,
Their 'surf-deer,' driven o'er wilds of brine.

Nay, hid by thee from Summer's gaze
That seeks in vain this couch of loam,
I should behold, without amaze,
Camped on yon down the hosts of Rome,
Nor start though English woodlands heard
The self-same mandatory word

As by the Cataracts of the Nile
Marshalled the legions long ago,
Or where the lakes are one blue smile
'Neath pageants of Helvetian snow,
Or 'mid the Syrian sands that lie
Sick of the day's great tearless eye,

Or on barbaric plains afar,
  Where, under Asia's fevering ray,
The long lines of imperial war
  O'er Tigris passed, and with dismay
In fanged and iron deserts found
Embattled Persia closing round,

And 'mid their eagles watched on high
  The vultures gathering for a feast,
Till, from the quivers of the sky,
  The gorgeous star-flight of the East
Flamed, and the bow of darkness bent
O'er Julian dying in his tent.

II

Was it the wind befooling me
  With ancient echoes, as I lay?
Was it the antic fantasy
  Whose elvish mockeries cheat the day?
Surely a hollow murmur stole
From wizard bough and ghostly bole:

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

'Who prates to me of arms and kings,
Here in these courts of old repose?
Thy babble is of transient things,
Broils, and the dust of foolish blows.
Thy sounding annals are at best
The witness of a world's unrest.

'Goodly the loud ostents to thee,
And pomps of time: to me more sweet
The vigils of Eternity,
And Silence patient at my feet;
And dreams beyond the deadening range
And dull monotonies of Change.

'Often an air comes idling by
With news of cities and of men.
I hear a multitudinous sigh,
And lapse into my soul again.
Shall her great noons and sunsets be
Blurred with thine infelicity?

'Now from these veins the strength of old,
The warmth and lust of life depart;
Full of mortality, behold
The cavern that was once my heart!
Me, with blind arm, in season due,
Let the aërial woodman hew.

'For not though mightiest mortals fall,
The starry chariot hangs delayed.
His axle is uncooled, nor shall
The thunder of His wheels be stayed."
A changeless pace His coursers keep,
And halt not at the wells of sleep.

'The South shall bless, the East shall blight,
The red rose of the Dawn shall blow;
The million-lilied stream of Night
Wide in ethereal meadows flow;
And Autumn mourn; and everything
Dance to the wild pipe of the Spring.

'With oceans heedless round her feet,
And the indifferent heavens above,
Earth shall the ancient tale repeat
Of wars and tears, and death and love;
And, wise from all the foolish Past,
Shall peradventure hail at last

'The advent of that morn divine
When nations may as forests grow,
Wherein the oak hates not the pine,
Nor beeches wish the cedars woe,
But all, in their unlikeness, blend
Confederate to one golden end—

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

'Beauty : the Vision whereunto,
In joy, with pantings, from afar,
Through sound and odour, form and hue,
And mind and clay, and worm and star—
Now touching goal, now backward hurled—
Toils the indomitable world.'

THE LOST EDEN

But yesterday was Man from Eden driven.
His dream, wherein he dreamed himself the first
Of creatures, fashioned for eternity—
This was the Eden that he shared with Eve.

Eve, the adventurous soul within his soul!
The sleepless, the unslaked! She showed him where
Amidst his pleasance hung the bough whose fruit
Is disenchantment and the perishing
Of many glorious errors. And he saw
His paradise how narrow: and he saw,—
He, who had well-nigh deemed the world itself
Of less significance and majesty
Than his own part and business in it!—now
Little that part, and in how great a world.
And an imperative world-thirst drave him forth,
And the gold gates of Eden clanged behind.

THE LOST EDEN

Never shall he return: for he hath sent
His spirit abroad among the infinitudes,
And may no more to the ancient pales recall
The travelled feet. But oftentimes he feels
The intolerable vastness bow him down,
The awful homeless spaces daunt his soul;
And half-regretful he remembers then
His Eden lost, as some grey mariner
May think of the far fields where he was bred,
And woody ways unbreathed-on by the sea,
Though more familiar now the ocean-paths
Gleam, and the stars his fathers never knew.

THE BLIND SUMMIT

(A Viennese gentleman, who had climbed the Hoch-König without a guide, was found dead, in a sitting posture, near the summit, upon which he had written, 'It is cold, and clouds shut out the view.' —The *Daily News* of September 10, 1891.)

So mounts the child of ages of desire,
Man, up the steeps of Thought; and would behold
Yet purer peaks, touched with unearthlier fire,
In sudden prospect virginally new;
But on the lone last height he sighs: 'Tis cold,
And clouds shut out the view.'

Ah, doom of mortals! Vexed with phantoms old,
Old phantoms that waylay us and pursue,—
Weary of dreams,—we think to see unfold
The eternal landscape of the Real and True;
And on our Pisgah can but write, 'Tis cold,
And clouds shut out the view.'

THE GREAT MISGIVING

'Not ours, say some, 'the thought of death to dread;
Asking no heaven, we fear no fabled hell:
Life is a feast, and we have banqueted—
Shall not the worms as well?

'The after-silence, when the feast is o'er,
And void the places where the minstrels stood
Differs in nought from what hath been before,
And is nor ill nor good.'

Ah, but the Apparition—the dumb sign—
The beckoning finger bidding me forego
The fellowship, the converse, and the wine,
The songs, the festal glow!

And ah, to know not, while with friends I sit,
And while the purple joy is passed about,
Whether 'tis ampler day divinelier lit
Or homeless night without;

And whether, stepping forth, my soul shall see
New prospects, or fall sheer—a blinded thing!
There is, O grave, thy hourly victory,
And there, O death, thy sting.

THE CAPTIVE'S DREAM

From birth we have his captives been :
For freedom, vain to strive !
This is our chamber ; windows five
Look forth on his demesne ;
And each to its own several hue
Translates the outward scene.
We cannot once the landscape view
Save with the painted panes between.

Ah, if there be indeed
Beyond one darksome door a secret stair,
That, winding to the battlements, shall lead
Hence to pure light, free air !
This is the master hope, or the supreme despair.

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

[*The Argument is this: that the evolution of Man, such as we see him, from some inferior form of animal life, after immeasurable ages during which there is reason to think that the inferior form remained unprogressive and stationary, has very much the appearance of a splendid accident; that the occurrence of such a splendid accident on this planet affords no ground from which to infer the occurrence of similar splendid accidents in the experience of other inhabited orbs; that in the absence of any ground for such an inference, the theory of an upward movement or meliorative tendency as operating throughout nature generally, lacks support; that except upon this theory of the universality of the upward movement, a theory seen to be wanting in confirmation, no intelligible conception of a beneficent Theocracy can be based; and incidentally, that the heroic course is rather to reject than to welcome the solace of an optimism which apparently rests upon no securer foundation than that of instinctive Hope alone.*]

I

HIGHER than heaven they sit,
Life and her consort Law;
And One whose countenance lit
In mine more perfect awe,

Fain had I deemed their peer,
Beside them throned above:
Ev'n him who casts out fear,
Unconquerable Love.
Ah, 'twas on earth alone that I his beauty saw.

II

On earth, in homes of men,
In hearts that crave and die.
Dwells he not also, then,
With Godhead, throned on high?
This and but this I know:
His face I see not there:
Here find I him below,
Nor find him otherwhere;
Born of an aching world, Pain's bridegroom, Death's ally.

III

Did Heaven vouchsafe some sign
That through all Nature's frame
Boundless ascent benign
Is everywhere her aim,

Such as man hopes it here,
Where he from beasts hath risèn,—
Then might I read full clear,
Ev'n in my sensual prison,
That Life and Law and Love are one symphonious name.

IV

Such sign hath Heaven yet lent?
Nay, on this earth, are we
So sure 'tis real ascent
And very gain we see
'Gainst Evil striving still,
Some spoils of war we wrest:
Not to discover Ill
Were haply state as blest.
We vaunt, o'er doubtful foes, a dubious victory.

V

In cave and bosky dęne
Of old there crept and ran
The gibbering form obscene
That was and was not man.

The desert beasts went by
In fairer covering clad ;
More speculative eye
The couchant lion had,
And goodlier speech the birds, than we when we began.

VI

Was it some random throw
Of heedless Nature's die,
That from estate so low
Uplifted man so high ?
Through untold æons vast
She let him lurk and cower :
'Twould seem he climbed at last
In mere fortuitous hour,
Child of a thousand chances 'neath the indifferent sky.

VII

A soul so long deferred
In his blind brain he bore,
It might have slept unstirred
Ten million noontides more,

Yea, round him Darkness might
Till now her folds have drawn,
O'er that enormous night
So casual came the dawn,
Such hues of hap and hazard Man's Emergence wore!

VIII

If, then, our rise from gloom
Hath this capricious air,
What ground is mine to assume
An upward process *there*,
In yonder worlds that shine
From alien tracts of sky?
Nor ground to assume is mine
Nor warrant to deny.
Equal, my source of hope, my reason for despair.

IX

And though within me here
Hope lingers unsubdued,
'Tis because airiest cheer
Suffices for her food!

As some adventurous flower,
On savage crag-side grown,
Seems nourished hour by hour
From its wild self alone,
So lives inveterate Hope, on her own hardihood.

X

She tells me, whispering low:
'Wherefore and whence thou wast,
Thou shalt behold and know
When the great bridge is crossed.
For not in mockery He
Thy gift of wondering gave,
Nor bade thine answer be
The blank stare of the grave.
Thou shalt behold and know; and find again thy lost.'

XI

With rapt eyes fixed afar,
She tells me: 'Throughout Space,
Godward each peopled star
Runs with thy Earth a race.

Wouldst have the goal so nigh,
The course so smooth a field,
That Triumph should thereby
One half its glory yield ?
And can Life's pyramid soar all apex and no base ?

XII

She saith : ' Old dragons lie
In bowers of pleasance curled ;
And dost thou ask me why ?
It is a Wizard's world !
Enchanted princes these,
Who yet their scales shall cast,
And through his sorceries
Die into kings at last.
Ambushed in Winter's heart the rose of June is furled.'

XIII

Such are the tales she tells :
Who trusts, the happier he :
But nought of *virtue* dwells
In that felicity !

I think the harder feat
  Were his who should *withstand*
A voice so passing sweet,
  And so profuse a hand.—
Hope, I forego the wealth thou fling'st abroad so free!

XIV

Carry thy largess hence,
  Light Giver! Let me learn
To abjure the opulence
  I have done nought to earn;
And on this world no more
  To cast ignoble slight,
Counting it but the door
  Of other worlds more bright.
Here, where I fail or conquer, here is my concern:

XV

Here, where perhaps alone
  I conquer or I fail.
Here, o'es the dark Deep blown,
  I ask no perfumed gale;

I ask the unpampering breath
That fits me to endure
Chance, and victorious Death,
Life, and my doom obscure,
Who know not whence I am sped, nor to what port I sail.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

When, overarched by gorgeous night,
I wave my trivial self away ;
When all I was to all men's sight
Shares the erasure of the day ;
Then do I cast my cumbering load,
Then do I gain a sense of God.

Not him that with fantastic boasts
A sombre people dreamed they knew ;
The mere barbaric God of Hosts
That edged their sword and braced their thew :
A God they pitted 'gainst a swarm
Of neighbour Gods less vast of arm ;

A God like some imperious king,
Wroth, were his realm not duly awed ;

A God for ever hearkening
  Unto his self-commanded laud ;
A God for ever jealous grown
Of carven wood and graven stone ;

A God whose ghost, in arch and aisle,
  Yet haunts his temple—and his tomb ;
But follows in a little while
  Odin and Zeus to equal doom ;
A God of kindred seed and line ;
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine.

O streaming worlds, O crowded sky,
  O Life, and mine own soul's abyss,
Myself am scarce so small that I
  Should bow to Deity like this !
This my Begetter ? This was what
Man in his violent youth begot.

The God I know of, I shall ne'er
  Know, though he dwells exceeding nigh.
Raise thou the stone and find me there,
  Cleave thou the wood and there am I.
Yea, in my flesh his spirit doth flow,
Too near, too far, for me to know.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

Whate'er my deeds, I am not sure
  That I can pleasure him or vex :
I that must use a speech so poor
  It narrows the Supreme with sex.
Notes he the good or ill in man ?
To hope he cares is all I can.

I hope—with fear. For did I trust
  This vision granted me at birth,
The sire of heaven would seem less just
  Than many a faulty son of earth.
And so he seems indeed ! But then,
I trust it not, this bounded ken.

And dreaming much, I never dare
  To dream that in my prisoned soul
The flutter of a trembling prayer
  Can move the Mind that is the Whole.
Though kneeling nations watch and yearn,
Does the primordial purpose turn ?

Best by remembering God, say some,
  We keep our high imperial lot.
Fortune, I fear, hath oftenest come
  When we forgot—when we forgot !
A lovelier faith their happier crown,
But history laughs and weeps it down !

Know they not well, how seven times seven,
  Wronging our mighty arms with rust,
We dared not do the work of heaven
  Lest heaven should hurl us in the dust?
The work of heaven! 'Tis waiting still
The sanction of the heavenly will.

Unmeet to be profaned by praise
  Is he whose coils the world enfold;
The God on whom I ever gaze,
  The God I never once behold:
Above the cloud, beneath the clod:
The Unknown God, the Unknown God.

AN INSCRIPTION AT WINDERMERE

Guest of this fair abode, before thee rise
No summits vast, that icily remote
Cannot forget their own magnificence
Or once put off their kinghood ; but withal
A confraternity of stateliest brows,
As Alp or Atlas noble, in port and mien ;
Old majesties, that on their secular seats
Enthroned, are yet of affable access
And easy audience, not too great for praise,
Not arrogantly aloof from thy concerns,
Not vaunting their indifference to thy fate,
Nor so august as to contemn thy love.
Do homage to these suavely eminent ;
But privy to their bosoms wouldst thou be,
There is a vale, whose seaward-parted lips
Murmur eternally some half-divulged
Reluctant secret, where thou may'st o'erhear
The mountains interchange their confidences,
Peak with his federate peak, that think aloud

Their broad and lucid thoughts, in liberal day:
Thither repair alone: the mountain heart
Not two may enter; thence returning, tell
What thou hast heard; and 'mid the immortal friends
Of mortals, the selectest fellowship
Of poets divine, place shall be found for thee.

THEY AND WE

With stormy joy, from height on height,
The thundering torrents leap.
The mountain tops, with still delight,
Their great inaction keep.

Man only, irked by calm, and rent
By each emotion's throes,
Neither in passion finds content,
Nor finds it in repose.

ON LANDOR'S 'HELLENICS'

COME hither, who grow cloyed to surfeiting
With lyric draughts o'ersweet, from rills that rise
On Hybla not Parnassus mountain: come
With beakers rinsed of the dulcifluous wave
Hither, and see a magic miracle
Of happiest science, the bland Attic skies
True-mirrored by an English well;—no stream
Whose heaven-belying surface makes the stars
Reel, with its restless idiosyncrasy;
But well unstirred, save when at times it takes
Tribute of lovers' eyelids, and at times
Bubbles with laughter of some sprite below.

SINCE Life is rough,
  Sing smoothly, O Bard.
Enough, enough,
  To have *found* Life hard!

No record Art keeps
  Of her travail and throes.
There is toil on the steeps;
  On the summits, repose.

THE HEIGHTS AND THE DEEPS

THIS is the summit, wild and lone.
Westward the Cumbrian mountains stand.
Let me look eastward on mine own
Ancestral land.

O sing me songs, O tell me tales,
Of yonder valleys at my feet!
She was a daughter of these dales,
A daughter sweet.

Oft did she speak of homesteads there,
And faces that her childhood knew.
She speaks no more; and scarce I dare
To deem it true,

That somehow she can still behold
Sunlight and moonlight, earth and sea,
Which were among the gifts untold
She gave to me.

TO RICHARD HOLT HUTTON

Yes, I have had my griefs; and yet
I think that when I shake off life's annoy,
I shall, in my last hour, forget
All things that were not joy.

Have I not watched the starry throngs
Dance, and the soul of April break in bud?
Have I not taken Schubert's songs
Into my brain and blood?

I have seen the morn one laugh of gold;
I have known a mind that was a match for Fate;
I have wondered what the heavens can hold
Than simplest love more great.

And not uncrowned with honours ran
My days, and not without a boast shall end!
For I was Shakespeare's countryman;
And wert not thou my friend?

TO AUSTIN DOBSON

YES! urban is your Muse, and owns
An empire based on London stones;
Yet flow'rs, as mountain violets sweet,
Spring from the pavement 'neath her feet.

Of wilder birth this Muse of mine,
Hill-cradled, and baptized with brine;
And 'tis for her a sweet despair
To watch that courtly step and air!

Yet surely she, without reproof,
Greeting may send from realms aloof,
And even claim a tie in blood,
And dare to deem it sisterhood.

For well we know, those maidens be
All daughters of Mnemosyne;
And 'neath the unifying sun,
Many the songs—but Song is one.

TO H. D. TRAILL

TRAILL, 'tis a twelve-months' space and more
Since feet of mine have sought your door,
There where one fancies London's roar
Long leagues away,
And Thames an old-time-haunted shore
Keeps to this day.

For I, with course 'twere hard to trace,
Have southward, northward, set my face,
Coy to the vast and vague embrace
Of London's arms,
The siren's all-too liberal grace
And venal charms.

Daily on matron, man, and maid,
The dome of Wren hath cast its shade,
But I beyond its call have strayed
By land and sea;
And you a hundred *mots* have made
Unheard by me!

The loser I. ' Yet mine some gain
From vagrant hours of sun and rain,
And steps that still by mount or plain
Carried a mind
To one thing constant, as the vane
Is to the wind—

The service of that mistress hard
To whom a fixed and sole regard
Your vowed and dedicated bard
Dares not refuse,
Would he at last the least reward
Win from his Muse.

For still we rhymers, great or small,
Must gather, would we live at all,
Such casual manna as may fall,
A niggard meed,
On mortals whom the immortals call
But seldom feed.

And so, perhaps with fond pretence
That to the force of sheer, immense,
Importunate lyric opulence
Our lays are due,
We publish all our soul for pence—
Ay me, how few!

TO H. D. TRAILL

Happiest and best of singers he,
Who in Art's bondage greatly free,
Can harvest, from all things that be,
    Grist for the mill
Whose wheel a copious Castaly
    Turns at his will.

Whate'er we know, whate'er we dream,
All things that are, all things that seem,
All that in Nature's Academe
    Her graduates learn,
Was Bacon's province, Shakespeare's theme,
    Goethe's concern.

The poem, well the poet knows,
In ambush lurks where'er he goes,—
Lisps hidden in each wind that blows,
    Laughs in each wave,
Sighs from the bosom of the rose,
    Wails from the grave.

And Orphic laws of lute and verse
All the symphonious worlds coerce,
That hour by hour their parts rehearse,
    Winds, strings, and reeds,
In this orchestral universe
    The Maestro leads.

But though all Life, all good and ill,
Be plastic to the poet's will,
And though he find in every rill
His Hippocrene,
'Tis yet from sources hidden still,
And deeps unseen,

He wins, in favouring hours benign,
At older than the Delphic shrine,
Those intimations faint and fine,
To which belongs
Whatever character divine
Invest his songs.

And could we live more near allied
To cloud and mountain, wind and tide,
Cast this unmeaning coil aside,
And go forth free,
The World our goal, Desire our guide,
We then might see

Those master moments grow less rare,
And oftener feel that nameless air
Come rumouring from we know not where;
And touch at wniles
Fantastic shores, the fringes fair
Of fairy isles;

And hail the mystic bird that brings
News from the inner courts of things,
The eternal courier-dove whose wings
Are never furled ;
And hear the bubbling of the springs
That feed the world.

You smile at this too soaring strain ?
Well, in the smile is no disdain :
And if a more terrestrial vein
Befit my rhyme—
I promise not to soar again,
At least, this time.

And sooth to say, a humbler end
This verse was meant to serve, O friend :
For since to you I may not wend
(Such leagues deter)
Across the summer night I send
This messenger ;

And bid him tarry not, but flee,
And greet you well where'er you be ;
Praying he may not piteously
Faint by the road—
Of good regards for thine and thee
So large his load.

TO EDWARD DOWDEN

ON RECEIVING FROM HIM A COPY OF 'THE LIFE OF SHELLEY'

FIRST, ere I slake my hunger, let me thank
The giver of the feast. For feast it is,
Though of ethereal, translunary fare—
His story who pre-eminently of men
Seemed nourished upon starbeams and the stuff
Of rainbows, and the tempest, and the foam;
Who hardly brooked on his impatient soul
The fleshly trammels; whom at last the sea
Gave to the fire, from whose wild arms the winds
Took him, and shook him broadcast to the world.

In my young days of fervid poesy
He drew me to him with his strange far light,—
He held me in a world all clouds and gleams
And vasty phantoms, where ev'n Man himself
Moved like a phantom 'mid the clouds and gleams.
Anon the Earth recalled me, and a voice
Murmuring of dethroned divinities

And dead times deathless upon sculptured urn—
And Philomela's long-descended pain
Flooding the night—and maidens of romance
To whom asleep St. Agnes' love-dreams come—
Awhile constrained me to a sweet duresse
And thraldom, lapping me in high content,
Soft as the bondage of white amorous arms.
And then a third voice, long unheeded—held
Claustral and cold, and dissonant and tame—
Found me at last with ears to hear. It sang
Of lowly sorrows and familiar joys,
Of simple manhood, artless womanhood,
And childhood fragrant as the limpid morn;
And from the homely matter nigh at hand
Ascending and dilating, it disclosed
Spaces and avenues, calm heights and breadths
Of vision, whence I saw each blade of grass
With roots that groped about eternity,
And in each drop of dew upon each blade
The mirror of the inseparable All.
The first voice, then the second, in their turns
Had sung me captive. This voice sang me free.
Therefore, above all vocal sons of men,
Since him whose sightless eyes saw hell and heaven,
To Wordsworth be my homage, thanks, and love.
Yet dear is Keats, a lucid presence, great

With somewhat of a glorious soullessness.
And dear, and great with an excess of soul,
Shelley, the hectic flamelike rose of verse,
All colour, and all odour, and all bloom,
Steeped in the noonlight, glutted with the sun,
But somewhat lacking root in homely earth,
Lacking such human moisture as bedews
His not less starward stem of song, who, rapt
Not less in glowing vision, yet retained
His clasp of the prehensible, retained
The warm touch of the world that lies to hand,
Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day;
Who trusted nature, trusted fate, nor found
An Ogre, sovereign on the throne of things;
Who felt the incumbence of the unknown, yet bore
Without resentment the Divine reserve;
Who suffered not his spirit to dash itself
Against the crags and wavelike break in spray,
But 'midst the infinite tranquillities
Moved tranquil, and henceforth, by Rotha stream
And Rydal's mountain-mirror, and where flows
Yarrow thrice sung or Duddon to the sea,
And wheresoe'er man's heart is thrilled by tones
Struck from man's lyric heartstrings, shall survive.

LINES IN A FLYLEAF OF CHRISTABEL'

INHOSPITABLY hast thou entertained,
O Poet, us the bidden to thy board,
Whom in mid-feast, and while our thousand mouths
Are one laudation of the festal cheer,
Thou from thy table dost dismiss, unfilled.
Yet loudlier thee than many a lavish host
We praise, and oftener thy repast half-served
Than many a stintless banquet, prodigally
Through satiate hours prolonged; nor praise less well
Because with tongues thou hast not cloyed, and lips
That mourn the parsimony of affluent souls,
And mix the lamentation with the laud.

COLUMBUS

From his adventurous prime
He dreamed the dream sublime :
  Over his wandering youth
    It hung, a beckoning star.
At last the vision fled,
And left him in its stead
  The scarce sublimer truth,
    The world he found afar.

The scattered isles that stand
Warding the mightier land
  Yielded their maidenhood
    To his imperious prow.
The mainland within call
Lay vast and virginal :
  In its blue porch he stood :
    No more did fate allow.

COLUMBUS

No more! but ah, how much,
To be the first to touch
  The veriest azure hem
    Of that majestic robe
Lord of the lordly sea,
Earth's mightiest sailor he:
  Great Captain among them,
    The captors of the globe.

When shall the world forget
Thy glory and our debt,
  Indomitable soul,
    Immortal Genoese?
Not while the shrewd salt gale
Whines amid shroud and sail,
  Above the rhythmic roll
    And thunder of the seas.

THE GLIMPSE

JUST for a day you crossed my life's dull track,
Put my ignobler dreams to sudden shame,
Went your bright way, and left me to fall back
On my own world of poorer deed and aim ;

To fall back on my meaner world, and feel
Like one who, dwelling 'mid some smoke-dimmed town,—
In a brief pause of labour's sullen wheel,—
'Scaped from the street's dead dust and factory's frown,—

In stainless daylight saw the pure seas roll,
Saw mountains pillaring the perfect sky :
Then journeyed home, to carry in his soul
The torment of the difference till he die.

TO A CERTAIN GREAT POET

Poet, thy strain, a mountain cataract, leaps
From so remote and superhuman steeps,
It never finds the valley, but midway
Hangs beautifully lost upon the day,
In iridescence lost, in vapour spent,
Yet made immortal in evanishment.

TO A SLOVENLY VERSIFIER

Your gems, I take it, even in the rough,
For this rude age are more than good enough ?
Too mean were lapidarian toil for you ;
'Tis work we drudges may be left to do :
Poor painful slaves of our own paltry skill,
Doting uxorious on Perfection still.

LIFE WITHOUT HEALTH

Behold life builded as a goodly house
And grown a mansion ruinous
With winter blowing through its crumbling walls!
The master paceth up and down his halls,
And in the empty hours
Can hear the tottering of his towers
And tremor of their bases underground.
And oft he starts and looks around
At creaking of a distant door
Or echo of his footfall on the floor,
Thinking it may be one whom he awaits
And hath for many days awaited,
Coming to lead him through the mouldering gates
Out somewhere, from his home dilapidated.

TO A FRIEND

CHAFING AT ENFORCED IDLENESS FROM INTERRUPTED HEALTH

SOON may the edict lapse, that on you lays
This dire compulsion of infertile days,
This hardest penal toil, reluctant rest!
Meanwhile I count you eminently blest,
Happy from labours heretofore well done,
Happy in tasks auspiciously begun.
For they are blest that have not much to rue—
That have not oft mis-heard the prompter's cue,
Stammered and stumbled and the wrong parts played,
And life a Tragedy of Errors made.

INVENTION

I ENVY not the Lark his song divine,
  Nor thee, O Maid, thy beauty's faultless mould.
Perhaps the chief felicity is mine,
    Who hearken and behold.

The joy of the Artificer Unknown
  Whose genius could devise the Lark and thee—
This, or a kindred rapture, let me own,
    I covet ceaselessly !

LUX PERDITA

THINE were the weak, slight hands
That might have taken this strong soul, and bent
Its stubborn substance to thy soft intent,
And bound it unresisting, with such bands
As not the arm of envious heaven had rent.

Thine were the calming eyes
That round my pinnace could have stilled the sea,
And drawn thy voyager home, and bid him be
Pure with their pureness, with their wisdom wise,
Merged in their light, and greatly lost in thee.

But thou—thou passed'st on,
With whiteness clothed of dedicated days,
Cold, like a star; and me in alien ways
Thou leftest following life's chance lure, where shone
The wandering gleam that beckons and betrays.

THE SOVEREIGN POET

He sits above the clang and dust of Time,
With the world's secret trembling on his lip.
He asks not converse nor companionship
In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb.

The undelivered tidings in his breast
Suffer him not to rest.
He sees afar the immemorable throng,
And binds the scattered ages with a song.

The glorious riddle of his rhythmic breath,
His might, his spell, we know not what they be :
We only feel, whate'er he uttereth,
This savours not of death,
This hath a relish of eternity.

AN EPISTLE

(To N. A.)

So, into Cornwall you go down,
And leave me loitering here in town.
For me, the ebb of London's wave,
Not ocean-thunder in Cornish cave.
My friends (save only one or two)
Gone to the glistening marge, like you,—
The opera season with blare and din
Dying sublime in *Lohengrin*,—
Houses darkened, whose blinded panes
All thoughts, save of the dead, preclude,—
The parks a puddle of tropic rains,—
Clubland a pensive solitude,—
For me, now you and yours are flown,
The fellowship of books alone!

For you, the snaky wave, upflung,
With writhing head and hissing tongue;

The weed whose tangled fibres tell
Of some inviolate deep-sea dell;
The faultless, secret-chambered shell,
Whose sound is an epitome
Of all the utterance of the sea;
Great, basking, twinkling wastes of brine;
Far clouds of gulls that wheel and swerve
In unanimity divine,
With undulation serpentine,
And wondrous consentaneous curve,
Flashing in sudden silver sheen,
Then melting on the sky-line keen;
The world-forgotten coves that seem
Lapt in some magic old sea-dream,
Where, shivering off the milk-white foam,
Lost airs wander, seeking home,
And into clefts and caverns peep,
Fissures paven with powdered shell,
Recesses of primeval sleep,
Tranced with an immemorial spell;
The granite fangs eternally
Rending the blanch'd lips of the sea;
The breaker clutching land, then hurled
Back on its own tormented world;
The mountainous upthunderings,
The glorious energy of things,

The power, the joy, the cosmic thrill,
Earth's ecstasy made visible,
World-rapture old as Night and new
As sunrise ;—this, all this, for you !

So, by Atlantic breezes fanned,
You roam the limits of the land,
And I in London's world abide,
Poor flotsam on the human tide !—
Nay, rather, isled amid the stream—
Watching the flood—and, half in dream,
Guessing the sources whence it rose,
And musing to what Deep it flows.

For still the ancient riddles mar
Our joy in man, in leaf, in star.
The Whence and Whither give no rest,
The Wherefore is a hopeless quest ;
And the dull wight who never thinks,—
Who, chancing on the sleeping Sphinx,
Passes unchallenged,—fares the best !

But ill it suits this random verse
The high enigmas to rehearse,
And touch with desultory tongue
Secrets no man from Night hath wrung.

We ponder, question, doubt—and pray
The Deep to answer Yea or Nay;
And what does the engirdling wave,
The undivulging, yield us, save
Aspersion of bewildering spray?
We do but dally on the beach,
Writing our little thoughts full large,
While Ocean with imperious speech
Derides us trifling by the marge.
Nay, we are children, who all day
Beside the unknown waters play,
And dig with small toy-spade the sand,
Thinking our trenches wondrous deep,
Till twilight falls, and hand-in-hand
Nurse takes us home, well tired, to sleep
Sleep, and forget our toys, and be
Lulled by the great unsleeping sea.

Enough!—to Cornwall you go down,
And I tag rhymes in London town.

A CHILD'S HAIR

A LETTER from abroad. I tear
Its sheathing open, unaware
What treasure gleams within ; and there—
Like bird from cage—
Flutters a curl of golden hair
Out of the page.

From such a frolic head 'twas shorn !
('Tis but five years since he was born.)
Not sunlight scampering over corn
Were merrier thing.
A child ? A fragment of the morn,
A piece of Spring !

Surely an ampler, fuller day
Than drapes our English skies with grey—
A deeper light, a richer ray
Than here we know—
To this bright tress have given away
Their living glow.

For Willie dwells where gentian flowers
Make mimic sky in mountain bowers;
And vineyards steeped in ardent hours
Slope to the wave
Where storied Chillon's tragic towers
Their bases lave;

And over piny vales of Vaud
The rose of eve steals up the snow;
And on the waters far below
Strange sails like wings
Half-bodilessly come and go,
Fantastic things;

And tender night falls like a sigh
On chalet low and chateau high;
And the far cataract's voice comes by,
Where no man hears;
And spectral peaks impale the sky
On silver spears.

Ah, Willie, whose dissevered tress
Lies in my hand!—may you possess
At least one sovereign happiness,
Ev'n to your grave;
One boon than which I ask naught less,
Naught greater crave:

A CHILD'S HAIR

May cloud and mountain, lake and vale,
Never to you be trite or stale
As unto souls whose well-springs fail
Or flow defiled,
Till Nature's happiest fairy-tale
Charms not her child!

For when the spirit waxes numb,
Alien and strange these shows become,
And stricken with life's tedium
The streams run dry,
The choric spheres themselves are dumb,
And dead the sky,—

Dead as to captives grow supine,
Chained to their task in sightless mine:
Above, the bland day smiles benign,
Birds carol free,
In thunderous throes of life divine
Leaps the glad sea;

But they—their day and night are one.
What is't to them, that rivulets run,
Or what concern of theirs the sun?
It seems as though
Their business with these things was done
Ages ago:

Only, at times, each dulled heart feels
That somewhere, sealed with hopeless seals,
The unmeaning heaven about him reels,
And he lies hurled
Beyond the roar of all the wheels
Of all the world.

* * * * *

On what strange track one's fancies fare!
To eyeless-night in sunless lair
'Tis a far cry from Willie's hair;
And here it lies—
Human, yet something which can ne'er
Grow sad and wise:

Which, when the head where late it lay
In life's grey dusk itself is grey,
And when the curfew of life's day
By death is tolled,
Shall forfeit not the auroral ray
And eastern gold.

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

I

By cliff and chine, and hollow-nestling wood
Thrilled with the poignant savour of the sea,
All in the crisp light of a wintry morn,
We walked, my friend and I, preceded still
By one whose silken and voluminous suit,
His courtly ruff, snow-pure 'mid golden tan,
His grandly feathered legs slenderly strong,
The broad and flowing billow of his breast,
His delicate ears and superfine long nose,
With that last triumph, his distinguished tail,
In their collective glory spoke his race
The flower of Collie aristocracy.
Yet, from his traits, how absent that reserve,
That stillness on a base of power, which marks,
In men and mastiffs, the selectly sprung!
For after all, his high-life attributes,
His trick of doing nothing with an air,
His *salon* manners and society smile,

Were but skin-deep, factitious, and you saw
The bustling despot of the mountain flock,
And pastoral dog-of-all-work, underlie
The fashionable modern lady's pet,—
Industrial impulses bereft of scope,
Duty and discipline denied an aim,
Ancestral energy and strenuousness
In graceful trifling frittered all away.
Witness the depth of his concern and zeal
About minutest issues : shall we take
This path or that ?—it matters not a straw—
But just a moment unresolved we stand,
And all his personality, from ears
To tip of tail, is interrogative ;
And when from pure indifference we decide,
How he vociferates ! how he bounds ahead !
With what enthusiasm he ratifies,
Applauds, acclaims our choice 'twixt right and left,
As though some hoary problem over which
The world had puckered immemorial brows,
Were solved at last, and all life launched anew !

These and a thousand tricks and ways and traits
I noted as of Demos at their root,
And foreign to the staid, conservative,
Came-over-with-the-Conqueror type of mind.

And then, his nature, how impressionable,
How quickly moved to Collie mirth or woe,
Elated or dejected at a word!
And how unlike your genuine Vere de Vere's
Frigid, indifferent, half-ignoring glance
At everything outside the sacred pale
Of things De Veres have sanctioned from the Flood,
The unweariable curiosity
And universal open-mindedness
Of that all-testing, all-inquisitive nose!

II

So, to my friend's house, back we strolled; and there—
We loitering in the garden—from her post
Of purview at a window, languidly
A great Angora watched his Collieship,
And throned in monumental calm, surveyed
His effervescence, volatility,
Clamour on slight occasion, fussiness,
Herself immobile, imperturbable,
Like one whose vision seeks the Immanent
Behind these symbols and appearances,
The face within this transitory mask.

And as her eyes with indolent regard
Viewed his upbubblings of ebullient life,
She seemed the Orient Spirit incarnate, lost
In contemplation of the Western Soul !
Ev'n so, methought, the genius of the East,
Reposeful, patient, undemonstrative,
Luxurious, enigmatically sage,
Dispassionately cruel, might look down
On all the fever of the Occident ;—
The brooding mother of the unfilial world,
Recumbent on her own antiquity,
Aloof from our mutations and unrest,
Alien to our achievements and desires,
Too proud alike for protest or assent
When new thoughts thunder at her massy door ;—
Another brain dreaming another dream,
Another heart recalling other loves,
Too grey and grave for our adventurous hopes,
For our precipitate pleasures too august,
And in majestic taciturnity
Refraining her illimitable scorn.

A GOLDEN HOUR

A BECKONING spirit of gladness seemed afloat,
That lightly danced in laughing air before us:
The earth was all in tune, and you a note
Of Nature's happy chorus.

'Twas like a vernal morn, yet overhead
The leafless boughs across the lane were knitting:
The ghost of some forgotten Spring, we said,
O'er Winter's world comes flitting.

Or was it Spring herself, that, gone astray,
Beyond the alien frontier chose to tarry?
Was it some bold outrider of the May,
Some April-emissary?

The apparition faded on the air,
Capricious and incalculable comer.—
Wilt thou too pass, and leave my chill days bare,
And fall'n my phantom Summer?

'THE THINGS THAT ARE MORE EXCELLENT.'

As we wax older on this earth,
  Till many a toy that charmed us seems
Emptied of beauty, stripped of worth,
  And mean as dust and dead as dreams,—
For gauds that perished, shows that passed,
  Some recompense the Fates have sent:
Thrice lovelier shine the things that last,
  The things that are more excellent.

Tired of the Senate's barren brawl,
  An hour with silence we prefer,
Where statelier rise the woods than all
  Yon towers of talk at Westminster.
Let this man prate and that man plot,
  On fame or place or title bent:
The votes of veering crowds are not
  The things that are more excellent.

'THINGS THAT ARE MORE EXCELLENT'

Shall we perturb and vex our soul
For 'wrongs' which no true freedom mar,
Which no man's upright walk control,
And from no guiltless deed debar?
What odds though tonguesters heal, or leave
Unhealed, the grievance they invent?
To things, not phantoms, let us cleave—
The things that are more excellent.

Nought nobler is, than to be free:
The stars of heaven are free because
In amplitude of liberty
Their joy is to obey the laws.
From servitude to freedom's *name*
Free thou thy mind in bondage pent;
Depose the fetich, and proclaim
The things that are more excellent.

And in appropriate dust be hurled
That dull, punctilious god, whom they
That call their tiny clan the world,
Serve and obsequiously obey:
Who con their ritual of Routine,
With minds to one dead likeness blent,
And never ev'n in dreams have seen
The things that are more excellent.

To dress, to call, to dine, to break
No canon of the social code,
The little laws that lacqueys make,
The futile decalogue of Mode,—
How many a soul for these things lives,
With pious passion, grave intent!
While Nature careless-handed gives
The things that are more excellent.

To hug the wealth ye cannot use,
And lack the riches all may gain,—
O blind and wanting wit to choose,
Who house the chaff and burn the grain!
And still doth life with starry towers
Lure to the bright, divine ascent!—
Be yours the things ye would: be ours
The things that are more excellent.

The grace of friendship—mind and heart
Linked with their fellow heart and mind;
The gains of science, gifts of art;
The sense of oneness with our kind;
The thirst to know and understand—
A large and liberal discontent:
These are the goods in life's rich hand,
The things that are more excellent.

THINGS THAT ARE MORE EXCELLENT

In faultless rhythm the ocean rolls,
A rapturous silence thrills the skies ;
And on this earth are lovely souls,
That softly look with aidful eyes.
Though dark, O God, Thy course and track,
I think Thou must at least have meant
That nought which lives should wholly lack
The things that are more excellent.

TO JAMES BROMLEY, WITH A COPY OF 'WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE'

ERE vandal lords with lust of gold accurst
  Deface each hallowed hillside we revere—
Ere cities in their million-throated thirst
  Menace each sacred mere—
Let us give thanks because one nook hath been
  Unflooded yet by desecration's wave,
The little churchyard in the valley green
  That holds our Wordsworth's grave.

'Twas there I plucked these elegiac blooms,
  There where he rests 'mid comrades fit and few,
And thence I bring this growth of classic tombs,
  An offering, friend, to you—
You who have loved like me his simple themes,
  Loved his sincere large accent nobly plain,
And loved the land whose mountains and whose streams
  Are lovelier for his strain.

TO JAMES BROMLEY

It may be that his manly chant, beside
More dainty numbers, seems a rustic tune;
It may be, thought has broadened since he died
Upon the century's noon;
It may be that we can no longer share
The faith which from his fathers he received;
It may be that our doom is to despair
Where he with joy believed.

Enough that there is none since risen who sings
A song so gotten of the immediate soul,
So instant from the vital fount of things
Which is our source and goal;
And though at touch of later hands there float
More artful tones than from his lyre he drew,
Ages may pass ere trills another note
So sweet, so great, so true.

THE FUGITIVE IDEAL

As some most pure and noble face,
  Seen in the thronged and hurrying street,
Sheds o'er the world a sudden grace,
    A flying odour sweet,
Then, passing, leaves the cheated sense
Baulked with a phantom excellence ;

So, on our souls the visions rise
  Of that fair life we never led :
They flash a splendour past our eyes,
    We start, and they are fled :
They pass, and leave us with blank gaze,
Resigned to our ignoble days.

TO A YOUNG LADY WITH THE AUTHOR'S POEMS

UNDER your green embattled down,
Past the old quay and drowsy town,
On from his many arches grey,
The Torridge takes his ancient way.

Beneath your walls he passes by,
A pensive friend, a grave ally.
Read him my songs; it seems to me,
His mood and mine do well agree.

The ocean guards your Devon home;
His gifts are weed, and shell, and foam.
Wasteful of shell, and foam, and weed,
He locks his jewels fast indeed.

The poets, rich in dreams alone,
Will have you make their wealth your own
For whoso hath must never hold
The moonrise-pearl and sunset-gold.

ELUSION

WHERE shall I find thee, Joy? by what great marge
With the strong seas exulting? on what peaks
Rapt? or astray within what forest bourn,
Thy light hands parting the resilient boughs?

Hast thou no answer? . . . Ah, in mine own breast
Except unsought thou spring, though I go forth
And tease the waves for news of thee, and make
Importunate inquisition of the woods
If thou didst pass that way, I shall but find
The brief print of thy footfall on sere leaves
And the salt brink, and woo thy touch in vain.

THE SAINT AND THE SATYR

Saint Anthony the eremite
He wandered in the wold,
And there he saw a hoofèd wight
That blew his hands for cold.

'What dost thou here in misery,
That better far wert dead?'
The eremite Saint Anthony
Unto the Satyr said.

'Lorn in the wold,' the thing replied,
'I sit and make my moan,
For all the gods I loved have died,
And I am left alone.

'Silent, in Paphos, Venus sleeps,
And Jove, on Ida, mute;
And every living creature weeps
Pan and his perished flute.

'The Faun, his laughing heart is broke ;
The Nymph, her fountain fails ;
And driven from out the hollow oak
The Hamadryad wails.

'A God more beautiful than mine
Hath conquered mine, they say.—
Ah, to that fair young God of thine,
For me I pray thee pray !'

LINES WRITTEN IN RICHMOND PARK

LADY, were you but here !
The Autumn flames away,
And pensive in the antlered shade I stray.
The Autumn flames away, his end is near.
I linger where deposed and fall'n he lies,
Prankt in his last poor tattered braveries,
And think what brightness would enhance the Day,
Lady, were you but here.
Though hushed the woodlands, though sedate the skies,
Though dank the leaves and sere,
The storèd sunlight in your hair and eyes
Would vernalise
November, and renew the agèd year,
Lady, were you but here.

A RIDDLE OF THE THAMES

At windows that from Westminster
  Look southward to the Lollard's Tower,
She sat, my lovely friend. A blur
  Of gilded mist,—('twas morn's first hour,)—
Made vague the world : and in the gleam
Shivered the half-awakened stream.

Through tinted vapour looming large,
  Ambiguous shapes obscurely rode.
She gazed where many a laden barge
  Like some dim-moving saurian showed.
And 'midst them, lo ! two swans appeared,
And proudly up the river steered.

Two stately swans ! What did they there ?
  Whence came they ? Whither would they go ?
Think of them,—things so faultless fair,—
  'Mid the black shipping down below !
On through the rose and gold they passed,
And melted in the morn at last.

A RIDDLE OF THE THAMES

Ah, can it be, that they had come,
  Where Thames in sullied glory flows,
Fugitive rebels, tired of some
  Secluded lake's ornate repose,
Eager to taste the life that pours
Its muddier wave 'twixt mightier shores ?

We ne'er shall know : our wonderment
  No barren certitude shall mar.
They left behind them, as they went,
  A dream than knowledge ampler far ;
And from our world they sailed away
Into some visionary day.

TO S. W. IN THE FOREST

Fugitive to Fontainebleau
From this world of park and square,—
Is our London, think you, so
Super-erogantly fair
That yourself it well can spare?

Does the forest need you? No!
Any hidden hollow there
Sweet enough without you were.
You are palpably *de trop*
In the glades of Fontainebleau.

Ah, return!—and unto where
Winter never seems to know
When to tarry, when to go,
In your eyes and in your hair
Bring the Spring from Fontainebleau.

TOO LATE

Too late to say farewell,
To turn, and fall asunder, and forget,
And take up the dropped life of yesterday!
So ancient, so far-off, is yesterday
To the last hour ere I had kissed thy cheek!
Too late to say farewell.

Too late to say farewell.
Can aught remain hereafter as of old?
A touch, a tone hath changed the heaven and earth,
And in a hand-clasp all begins anew.
Somewhat of me is thine, of thee is mine.
Too late to say farewell.

Too late to say farewell.
We are not May-day masquers, thou and I!
We have lived deep life, we have drunk of tragic springs.
'Tis for light hearts to take light leave of love,
But ah, for me, for thee, too late, dear Spirit!
Too late to say farewell.

THE SIXTY-FIVE ELEMENTS

(Written after reading the Marquis of Salisbury's Address to the British Association, 1894)

Master, I marvel not at all, that these
Mock at the wit that would their purport seize.
A maiden's sigh—the descant of a bird—
Me with triumphant riddles haunt and tease.

I well believe, despite of all he knows,
The wonder of the sweetness of a rose,
The wonder of the wild heart of a song,
Shall shame man's foolish wisdom to the close.

The secrets of the gods are from of old
Guarded for ever and for ever told,—
Blabbed in all ears, but published in a tongue
Whose meaning the gods only can unfold.

A COURTEZAN—A PATRON

Consider her: a woman in whose heart
Whiteness had once some part:
A woman from whose heart, to-day, is hidden
No lore of things forbidden.

And him? Unholy scriptures who could spy,
Writ in that brow and eye?
Lightly on man they are pencilled; deep-tattooed
On hapless womanhood!

THE VENUSBERG

Aphrodite ocean-born
Came to Pan the forest-wise ;
In her hair was all the Morn,
All the Sea was in her eyes.

'Mighty Wood-God, let us twain
Earth's dominion 'twixt us part ;
Thou on her cool breast to reign,
I within her burning heart.'

So her secret court she holds,
Far 'neath roots of rock and tree ;
He, in vales and woods and wolds,
Pipes unto Eternity.

THE BALLAD OF SEMMERWATER

NORTH-COUNTRY LEGEND

Deep asleep, deep asleep,
Deep asleep it lies,
The still lake of Semmerwater
Under the still skies.

And many a fathom, many a fathom,
Many a fathom below,
In a king's tower and a queen's bower
The fishes come and go.

Once there stood by Semmerwater
A mickle town and tall;
King's tower and queen's bower,
And the wakeman on the wall.

Came a beggar halt and sore:
'I faint for lack of bread.'
King's tower and queen's bower
Cast him forth unfed.

He knocked at the door of the eller's cot,
The eller's cot in the dale.
They gave him of their oatcake,
They gave him of their ale.

He has cursed aloud that city proud,
He has cursed it in its pride ;
He has cursed it into Semmerwater
Down the brant hillside ;
He has cursed it into Semmerwater,
There to bide.

King's tower and queen's bower,
And a mickle town and tall ;
By glimmer of scale and gleam of fin,
Folk have seen them all.
King's tower and queen's bower,
And weed and reed in the gloom ;
And a lost city in Semmerwater,
Deep asleep till Doom.

LAKELAND ONCE MORE

MERE under mountains lone, like a moat under lowering ramparts ;
Garrulous petulant beck, sinister laughterless tarn ;
Haunt of the vagabond feet of my fancy for ever reverting,
Haunt of this vagabond heart, Cumbrian valleys and fells ;
You that enchant all ears with the manifold tones of silence,
You that around me, in youth, magical filaments wove ;
You were my earliest passion, and when shall its fealty falter ?
Ah, when Helvellyn is low ! ah, when Winander is dry !
Had I not dwelt where Nature but prattled familiar language,

Homely the theme and the word, prose of the hedges and lanes ?
Here she spake to my spirit in lofty and resonant numbers,
Rhythms of epical mood, silences great as her song.
Time hath scattered his gifts ; and Death hath taken his tribute :
Eastward, westward blown, out of your ken I have fared ;
Watched in jewelled midnight the Mediterranean twinkling ;
Watched, from Como's wave, pinnacled summits afire ;
Heard the delight of the waters that break upon savage Tantallon ;
Heard the upthundering tides harry Tintagel in vain ;
Fortune stormy and fair, my life's frail pinnace hath weathered,
Shocks of calamity borne, gusts of a shattering joy,
Mine being good without stint, nor niggardly portion of evil,
Friendships, enmities mine, love and a whisper of fame :

Yet unto you I turn, O land in whose mountain portals
Rustles my Past like leaves, memories brush me as wings,
Meets me the face, grown strange, of the self that is lost, that is vanished,
Furtive revisitant Shades hover and sigh and depart ;
Ever, O meres and valleys, an aureole haunts you of roselight,
Glamour of luminous hours, wraith of my passion of old ;
Ever the brows of Helvellyn are flushed with a virginal rapture,
Lit with the glow of my youth, crimson with dawn of its day.

A PRELUDE

The mighty poets from their flowing store
Dispense like casual alms the careless ore ;
Through throngs of men their lonely way they go,
Let fall their costly thoughts, nor seem to know.—
Not mine the rich and showering hand, that strews
The facile largess of a stintless Muse.
A fitful presence, seldom tarrying long,
Capriciously she touches me to song—
Then leaves me to lament her flight in vain,
And wonder will she ever come again.

NARRATIVE POEMS

THE DREAM OF MAN

A Fantasy

To the eye and the ear of the Dreamer, this Dream
out of darkness flew,
Through the horn or the ivory portal—he wist
not which of the two.

It was the Human Spirit, of all men's souls the
Soul,
Man the unwearied climber, that climbed to the
unknown goal.
And up the steps of the ages, the difficult, steep
ascent,
Man, the unwearied climber, pauseless and daunt-
less went.
Æons rolled behind him with thunder of far
retreat,
And still as he strove he conquered, and laid his
foes at his feet.

Inimical powers of nature, the thunder, the flood,
and the fire,
The spleen of fickle seasons that loved to baulk
his desire,
The breath of climates hostile, the ravage of blight
and dearth,
The old unrest that vexes the heart of the moody
earth,
The tramp of the hooves of tempest on valley and
golden plain,
The host whose sire is corruption, whose seed
is venom and bane,
What powers soever are watchful to harass him
or withstand,
He made them meek in his service and ductile to
his hand.
Disease and her ravening offspring, pain with the
myriad teeth,
He drave into night primeval, the nethermost
worlds beneath,
Till the Lord of Death, the undying, ev'n Asraël
the King,
No more with Furies for heralds came armed with
scourge and sting,
But gentle of voice and of visage, by calm Age
ushered and led,

A guest, serenely featured, entering, woke no dread.
And as æons after æons retreated with pomp of sound,
Man's Spirit grew too lordly for this mean orb to bound,
And by arts in his youth undreamed of his bonds terrene he broke,
With enterprise ethereal disdaining the natal yoke,
And, fired with a cosmic ambition, that brooked not earthly bars,
He conquered the virgin planets and peopled the desert stars.

Then said he, 'The infinite Scripture my soul hath deciphered clear,
And searching all worlds I have found not my sovereign or my peer.
In what room of the palace of nature resides the invisible God?
For all her doors I have opened, and all her floors I have trod.
If greater than I be her tenant, let him answer my challenging call
Till then I admit no rival, but crown myself master of all.'

And forth as that word went bruited, by Man unto Man were raised
Fanes of devout self-homage, where he who praised was the praised ;
And from vast unto vast of creation the new evangel ran,
And an odour of world-wide incense went up from Man unto Man ;
Until, on a solemn feast-day, when the world's usurping lord
At a million impious altars his own proud image adored,
God spake as He stept from His ambush : 'O great in thine own conceit,
I will show thee thy source, how humble, thy goal, for a god how unmeet.'

Thereat, by the word of the Maker the Spirit of Man was led
To a mighty peak of vision, where God to His creature said :
'Look eastward toward time's sunrise. And, age upon age untold,
The Spirit of Man saw clearly the Past as a chart out-rolled,—

Beheld his base beginnings in the depths of time, his strife
With beasts and crawling horrors for leave to live, when life
Meant only to slay and to procreate, to feed and to sleep, among
Mere mouths, voracities boundless, blind lusts, desires without tongue,
And ferocities vast, fulfilling their being's malignant law,
While nature was but one hunger, and one hate, all fangs and maw.

With that, for a single moment, abashed at his own descent,
In humbleness Man's Spirit at the feet of the Maker bent;
But, swifter than light, he recovered the stature and pose of his pride,
And, 'Think not thus to shame me with my mean birth,' he cried.
'For this is my loftiest greatness, that I was born so low;
Greater than Thou the ungrowing am I that for ever grow.

And God forbore to rebuke him, but answered brief and stern,
Bidding him toward time's sunset his vision westward turn ;
And the Spirit of Man obeying beheld as a chart out-rolled
The likeness and form of the Future, age upon age untold ;
Beheld his own meridian, and beheld his dark decline,
His secular fall to nadir from summits of light divine,
Till at last, amid worlds exhausted, and bankrupt of force and fire,
'Twas his, in a torrent of darkness, like a sputtering lamp to expire.

Then a war of shame and anger did the realm of his soul divide.
'I believe not the mocking vision,' in the presence of God he cried.
'Thou thinkest to daunt me with shadows ; not such as Thou feign'st is my doom.
From glory to rise unto glory is mine who am risen from gloom.

With spoil of Thy captured secrets already my ways are strown.
I doubt if Thou knew'st at my making how near I should climb to Thy throne.
Nor shall I look backward nor rest me, till the uttermost heights I have trod,
And am equalled with Thee or above Thee, the mate or the master of God

Ev'n thus Man turned from the Maker, with thundered defiance wild,
And God with a terrible silence reproved the speech of His child.
And Man returned to his labours, and stiffened the neck of his will;
And æons rolled unto æons, and his power was crescent still.
But yet there remained to conquer one foe, and the greatest—although
Despoiled of his ancient terrors, at heart, as of old, a foe—
Unmaker of all, and renewer, who winnows the world with his wing,
The Lord of Death, the undying, ev'n Asraël the King.

And lo, Man mustered his forces the war of wars
to wage,
And with storm and thunder of onset did the foe
of foes engage,
And the Lord of Death, the undying, was beset
and harried sore,
In his immemorial fastness at night's aboriginal core.
And Man, during years a thousand, beleaguered
his enemy's hold,
While nature was one dread tremor, and the heart
of the world waxed cold,
Till the phantom battlements wavered, and the
ghostly fortress fell,
And Man with shadowy fetters bound fast great
Asraël.

And unto each star in the heavens the jubilant
word was blown,
The annunciation tremendous, *Death is overthrown!*
And Life in her ultimate borders prolonged the
exultant tone,
With hollow ingeminations: *Death is overthrown!*
And God in His house of silence, where He
dwelleth aloof, alone,
Paused in His tasks to hearken: *Death is over-
thrown!*

Then a solemn and high thanksgiving by Man unto Man was sung,
In his temples of self-adoration, with his own multitudinous tongue;
And he said to his Soul: 'Rejoice thou, for thy last great foe lies bound,
Ev'n Asraël the Unmaker, unmade, disarmed, discrowned.'

And behold, his Soul rejoiced not, for the breath of her being was strife,
And life that had nothing to vanquish was but as the shadow of life.
No goal invited and promised and divinely provocative shone;
And Fear having fled, her sister, blest Hope, in her train was gone;
And the coping and crown of achievement was hell than defeat more dire—
The torment of all-things-compassed, the plague of nought-to-desire;
And Man the invincible queller, man with his foot on his foes,
In boundless satietv hungered, restless from utter repose,

Mighty o'ercomer of Nature, subduer of Death in his lair,
By mightier weariness vanquished, and crowned with august despair.

Then, throned at his dreadful zenith, he cried unto God: 'O Thou
Whom erst in the days of striving methought that I needed not,—now
In this my abject glory, my hopeless and helpless might,
Hearken and cheer and succour!' and God from His lonelier height,
From eternity's passionless summits, on suppliant Man looked down,
And his brow waxed human with pity, belying its awful crown.
'Thy richest possession,' He answered, 'blest Hope, will I restore,
And the infinite wealth of weakness wherein was thy strength of yore;
And I will arouse from slumber, in his hold where bound he lies,
Thine enemy most benefic;—O Asraël, hear and rise!'

And a sound like the heart of nature in sunder cloven and torn
Announced, to the ear universal, undying Death new-born.
And ev'n as a hunter, awakened in a forest all sere and brown,
Shakes lightly the leaves from his raiment, so Death his bonds shook down.

And Deity paused and hearkened, then turned to the undivine,
And said, 'O Man, My creature, thy lot was more blest than Mine.
I taste not delight of seeking, nor the rapture of striving know.
These only are joys transcendent, and I hoard them not but bestow,—
On thee for a season bestow them, ere the dusk of thy day fall chill,
And thou and thy works commingled are ground as grain at the mill.'

Thus, to the Soul of the Dreamer, this Dream out of darkness flew,
Through the horn or the ivory portal,—he wist not which of the two.

THE ELOPING ANGELS

A Caprice

Faust, on a day, and Mephistopheles,
In the dead season, were supremely bored.
'What shall we do, our jaded souls to please?'
Said Faust to his Familiar and his lord.
'All pleasures have we tasted at our ease,
All byways of all sin have we explored.
What *shall* we do, our jaded souls to please?'
'Ah, what indeed?' said Mephistopheles.

To whom thus Faust: 'Mephisto mine, thou art
A devil of exceeding rich resource;
Hast in thy time played every human part,
And under Satan braved celestial Force;
Thou carriest lightly in thy brain a chart
Of all the worlds, and every planet's course:
Canst not procure us, by thy wit's rare power,
Admission into heaven for half-an-hour?

'Thou know'st the approaches well; didst learn to scale
The starriest heights, in thy distinguished Past:
The Seraphim familiarly couldst hail,
And with Saint Peter an old friendship hast.
Some private influence surely would avail,
Joined with the prestige of thy name and caste.
'Twould mightily amuse me, I declare,
For once to see how wags the world up there.'

To whom Mephisto: 'Ah, you underrate
The hazards and the dangers, my good Sir.
Peter is stony as his name; the gate,
Excepting to invited guests, won't stir.
'Tis long since he and I were intimate:
We differed;—but to bygones why refer?
Still, there are windows; if a peep through these
Would serve your turn, we'll start whene'er you please.'

So, on the wings of magic power, these twain
Ascended through the steep and giddy night;
And soon this earth and all it doth contain
Shrank to a point of hesitating light,

Till, as they climbed those altitudes inane,
The battlements celestial dawned in sight,
And domes and turrets made one golden gleam,
Splendid beyond all splendour born of dream.

Unto a window in the heavenly wall,
A casement open to the night, they came,
Mephisto breaking silence : 'After all,
This sort of prank, to me, is rather tame,
And my concern with Paradise is small :
My int'rests lie elsewhere ; but all the same,
You, as a stranger, might do worse than cast
A glance inside : most probably, your last.'

'Soft ! ' answered Faust, 'I hear a voice within,
And if it be not some enamoured youth
Breathing warm words a maiden's heart to win,
Like any mortal wooer, in good sooth
Thou art not the great amateur of sin,
Nor I a seeker after hidden truth.
Nay, sure enough—look !—what a charming pair !
Such eyes she has ! And that auroral hair ! '

Faust had not erred. These angels were indeed
Two human lovers, who, by sudden fate,
Full early from the yoke of life being freed,
Renewed their vows in that celestial state.

Now Faust, although immoral, was, I need
Hardly affirm, a gentleman. 'I hate,'
He said, 'to play the spy at scenes like this.
So he coughed loudly on their whispering bliss.

'Immortal Spirits! Beatitudes divine!
Behold,' he said, 'two wanderers from that star
Whence haply ye too hail: whose glories shine
Lost in deep space, so faint and pale they are.
If ye will graciously an ear incline,
And parley with us travellers from afar,
Fain would we learn such news as may be given
Of what—in short—is going on in heaven.'

'Friends, for such tidings ye in vain apply
To me,' the radiant Youth Angelic said.
'We lead a life withdrawn, this maid and I,
Nor love the life by other angels led—
All idle hymns of praise to the Most High.
Our one supreme desire is to be wed,
And we were even now concerting schemes
How to escape and realise our dreams.

For here in heaven no marrying is, nor yet
Giving in marriage, and we dwell debarred
From that full tie whereon our hearts are set—
An inhibition surely somewhat hard.

One only hindrance—a most serious let—
Doth still the moment of our flight retard:
To wit, this garb angelic, which on earth
Would comment cause, and haply move to
mirth.'

'Tut,' said Mephisto, making answer shrewd:
'You shall change wardrobes with my friend
and me.
Our earthly vesture when you have endued,—
'Tis somewhat picturesque, as you may see,—
Across the interstellar vastitude
Safely to earth (dear planet!) you shall flee.
You have my blessing, both of you. And now
We will effect the exchange, if you'll allow.'

Merely to will, when spirit with spirit deals,
Is to perform. The bargain once being made,
Faust, in a thought, appears from head to heels
Clad in the garments of the angel-maid,
She in his own; the devil quite pious feels,
In garb of heaven becomingly arrayed;
While the Bright Lover clothes divine desire
In most unhallowed and unblest attire.

Faust and his companion entered, by
The window, the abodes where seraphs dwell.
Already morning quickens in the sky,
And soon will sound the heavenly matin-bell;
Our time is short,' Mephisto said, 'for I
Have an appointment about noon in hell.
Dear dear! why, heaven has hardly changed one
bit
Since the old days before the historic split.'

But leave we now this enterprising pair,
Faust the explorer, and his subtile guide,
And follow yon bright fugitives in their
Ethereal journey whither mortals bide.
Across the wastes of space and fields of air
Tireless they sped, and soon this orb descried,
Hung like a fairy lamp with timid gleam
From the great branches of the Solar Scheme.

She, on the earth, a village girl, and he
A prince had been. 'Twas pure romance of
love,
Idyllic and ideal as could be,
All policy and prudence far above.

And when he fell in glorious battle, she
Could not survive him, poor, white, mateless dove!
And now on earth they stepped once more, and met
The ghosts of old dead kisses deathless yet.

'Twas morn. The lark was making for the sky,
The ploughman was returning to his plough.
'Unto my father's palace we will fly,'
Said the angelic Prince. 'Another, now,
Sits on his throne, but loyally will I
Serve him, and gladly to his sceptre bow;
And us, I doubt not, he will entertain,
And cheerly bid us welcome home again.'

So, to the royal palace having flown,
And in no form or due observance failed,
With mien of homage they approached the throne;
But the poor craven king in terror quailed,
Shrieking: 'More spectres! Out, ye sprites, begone!
Have all my exorcists not yet availed
To rid me of these ghostly plagues that make
Life dreadful, if I sleep or if I wake?'

Then, with sad eyes compassionate, the twain
Faded from out the presence, nothing loth
The presence of the fields and skies to gain.
And she, the queen of his rich love and troth,
Spake very softly: 'Dearest, wilt thou deign
To seek my father's cottage, where for both
Shall room and welcome be? for he doth own
A heart more royal than thy kinsman's throne.'

Unto her father's cot they took their way.
They found him leaning on his gate, white-haired,
Full of the memory of a former day.
Calmly he greeted them, like one prepared
For loftiest visitants, as who should say:
'My son and daughter, that so far have fared,
I have awaited you this many a year.
Enter and rest, my son and daughter dear.'

And entering in, they veiled their heavenly sheen
In homely vesture, and themselves resigned
To homely tasks. A milkmaid or a queen,
Her had you deemed: an emperor him, or hind.
Of port majestic, yet of humblest mien—
Immortals, thrilled with touch of mortal kind—
To notes of earth they gave a sphery tone,
And knit the hearts of all things with their own.

there they stayed, and to the neighbou[illegible]
The story of their earthward flight revealed;
nd more than paradisal bliss they drew
From the familiar life of hearth and field.
ontent with pleasures which the lowliest knew,
The wealth which all things unto all things yield,
They vowed that nought should ever them decoy
Back to their selfish heaven of unearned joy.

Yet theirs were many griefs, for evermore
They made the pangs of other hearts their own,
Feeling all pain they saw; and thus they bore
The burden of the universal moan,
Wept with all tears, and with all wounds were sore.
But likewise all the joy by others known
Became their joy; and in the world-wide scale,
Pleasure, they found, o'er pain did still prevail.

So, on the earth, as angels they remained,
Yet more than angels, being lovers too;
All their celestial loveliness retained,
And evermore in earthly sweetness grew.
Thus lost they nothing of divine, and gained
Everything human save what men must rue,
Uniting all below with all above,
Linking the stars and flowers in perfect love.

But being deathless, ever 'twas their doom,
Loving their fellows, to lament them dead.
Age after age, they saw the opening tomb,
And saw it close upon a comrade's head.
Yet what the grave took from them, that the womb
Gave back; 'for death is but a form,' they said,
'Birth a convention: nought is less or more;
And nature but reclaimeth to restore.'

And still they tarry. I have met them oft,
With their pure voices and caressing eyes.
You hear the rustle of their raiment soft,
And, looking up, behold with no surprise
The coronal they never yet have doffed,
The lucid aureole worn in Paradise:
Nor can you marvel that they never cared
For joys which only idle angels shared.

* * * * *

'I think,' said Faust—alighting here below
From his adventurous translunary jaunt—
'This earth is still the nicest place I know.
It always teases me when people flaunt
Their own superior bliss before me, so
Aggressively, as in that sinless haunt
Where we have just been privileged to see
The dulness of entire felicity.

And then, their bliss itself—no objects new
Tempting the soul for ever forth to press!
One goal attained, another half in view,
One riddle solved, another still to guess,
Something subdued, and something to subdue,
Are the conditions of our happiness.
I know no harsher ordinance of fate
Than the stagnation of your perfect state.'

'All which,' Mephisto said, 'I've heard before.
Well, you and I no risk need apprehend
Of being stranded on that tedious shore.
From all such perils we are safe, my friend,
So make yourself quite easy on that score,
And your great mind to other matters bend.
Meanwhile, old fellow, Earth for you and me!
(*Aside.*) How he will take to *my* place, we shall see.'

DOMINE QUO VADIS?

A Legend

Against the azure roof of Nero's world,
From smouldering Rome the smoke of ruin curled;
And the fierce populace went clamouring—
'These Christian dogs, 'tis they have done this thing!'
So to the wild wolf Hate were sacrificed
The panting, huddled flock whose crime was Christ.

Now Peter lodged in Rome, and rose each morn
Looking to be ere night in sunder torn,
Or haled to crucifixion, or by fire
Slain at the altar of a people's ire.
And unto him, their towering rocky hold,
Repaired those sheep of his great Master's fold
Upon whose fleece as yet no blood or foam
Bare witness to the ravening fangs of Rome.
'Lighter than chaff,' they cried, 'we hold our lives,
And rate them cheap as dust the whirlwind drives:

As chaff they are winnowed and as dust they are
blown;
Nay, they are nought; but priceless is thine own.
Not in yon streaming shambles must thou die;
We counsel, we entreat, we charge thee, fly!'
And Peter answered brief: 'My place is here;
Through the dread storm, this ship of Christ I
steer.'

Then one stood forth, the flashing of whose
soul
Enrayed his presence like an aureole.
'Let *us*,' he cried, 'be in the wine-press trod,
And poured a beverage for the lips of God.
Behold, the Church hath other use for thee;
Thy safety is her safety, thou must flee.
Ours be the glory at her call to die,
But quick and whole God needs His great ally.'
And Peter said: 'Do lords of spear and shield
Thus leave their hosts uncaptained in the field,
And from some mount of prospect watch afar
The havoc of the hurricane of war?
Yet, if He wills it. . . . Nay, my task is plain,—
To serve, and to endure, and to remain.
But frail of spirit I stand before you all.
Ah, prop me Thou, lest at a breath I fall.'

DOMINE QUO VADIS?

There knelt a noble youth at Peter's feet:
Ev'n as a viol's voice, his voice was sweet.
He said: 'My sire and brethren yesterday
The heathen did with ghastly torments slay.
An offering richer yet, can Heaven require?
O live, and be my brethren and my sire.
And Peter answered: 'Son, there is small need
That thou exhort me to the easier deed.
Rather I would that thou and these had lent
Strength to uphold, not shatter, my intent.
Already my resolve is shaken sore.
I pray thee, if thou love me, say no more.'

And even as he spake, he went apart,
Somewhat to hide the brimming of his heart,
Wherein a voice came flitting to and fro,
That now said 'Tarry!' and anon said 'Go!
And louder every moment, 'Go!' it cried,
And 'Tarry!' to a whisper sank, and died.
And as a leaf when summer is o'erpast
Hangs trembling ere it fall in some chance blast,
So hung his trembling purpose and fell dead;
And he arose, and hurried forth, and fled
To the Campania glimmering wide and still,
And strove to think he did his Master's will.

And darkness fell, and mocking Shapes pursued,
And with blind hands he fought a phantom brood.
Doubts, like a swarm of gnats, o'erhung his flight,
And 'Lord,' he prayed, 'have I not done aright?
Can I not, living, more avail for Thee
Than whelmed in yon red storm of agony?
The tempest, it shall pass, and I remain,
Not from its fiery sickle saved in vain.
Are there no seeds to sow, no desert lands
Waiting the tillage of these eager hands,
That I should beastlike 'neath the butcher fall,
And fruitlessly as oxen from the stall?
Is earth so easeful, is men's hate so sweet,
Are thorns so welcome unto sleepless feet,
Have death and heaven so feeble lures, that I,
Choosing to live, should win rebuke thereby?
Not mine the dread of pain, the lust of bliss!
Master who judgest, have I done amiss?'

Lo, on the darkness brake a wandering ray:
A vision flashed along the Appian Way.
Divinely in the pagan night it shone—
A mournful Face—a Figure hurrying on—

DOMINE QUO VADIS?

Though haggard and dishevelled, frail and worn,
A King, of David's lineage, crowned with thorn.
'Lord, whither farest?' Peter, wondering, cried.
'To Rome,' said Christ, 'to be re-crucified.'

Into the night the vision ebbed like breath;
And Peter turned, and rushed on Rome and death.

END OF VOL. I

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